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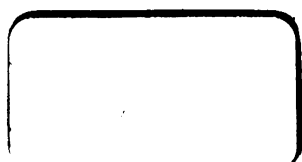
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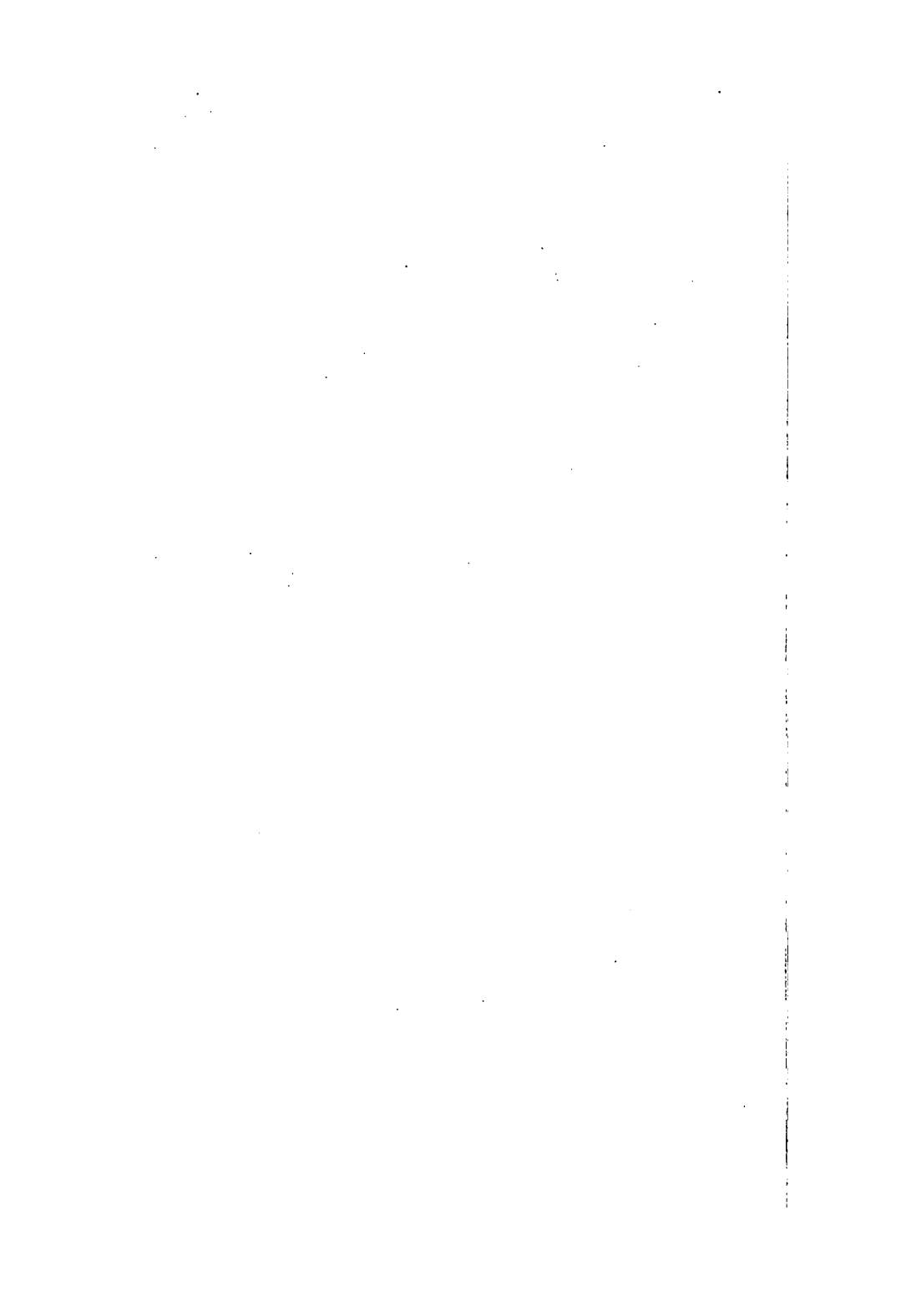
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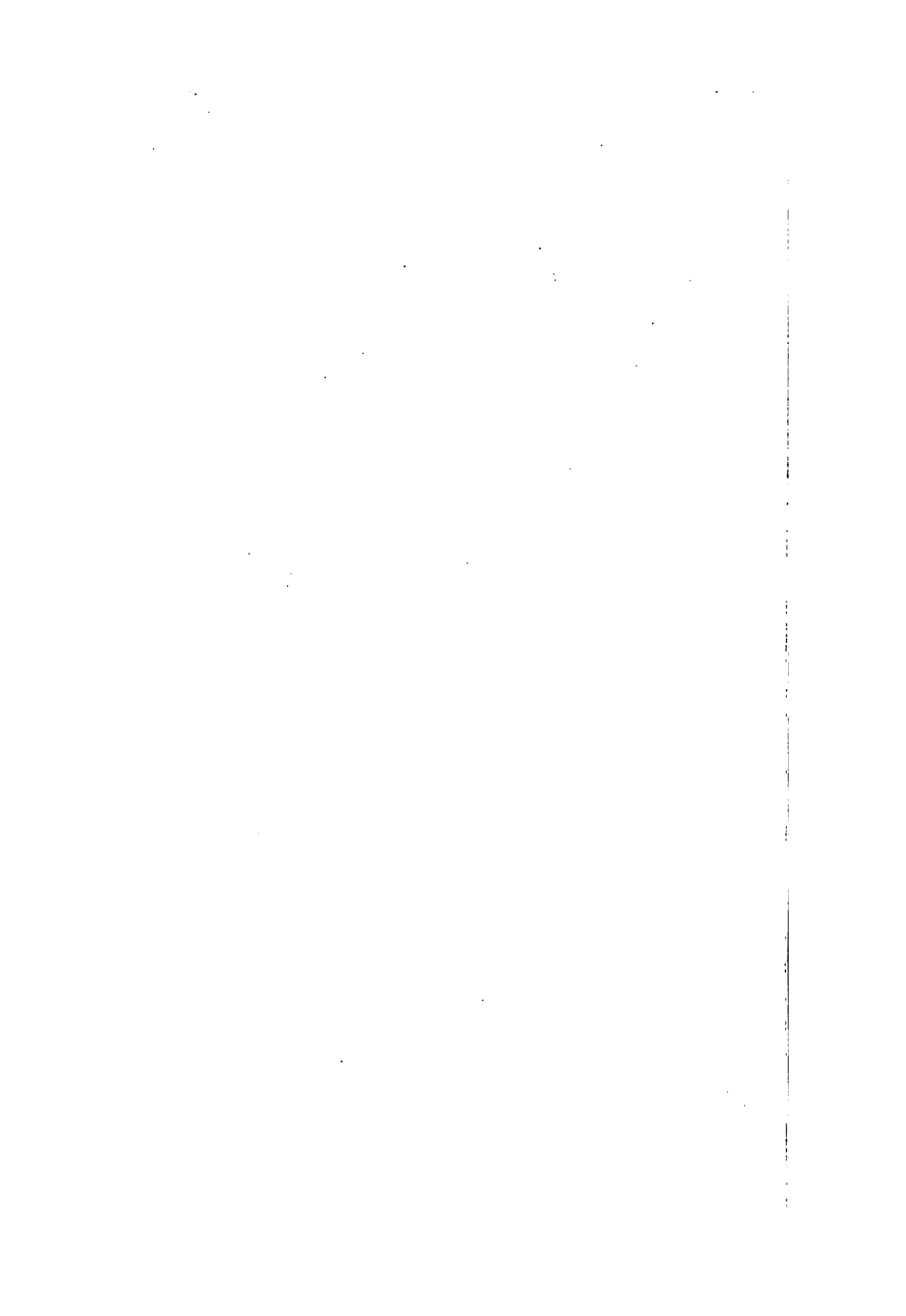


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THE
HEIRESS AND HER LOVERS.

A *Nobel*.

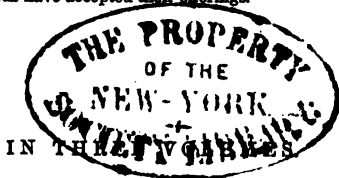
BY
GEORGIANA LADY CHATTERTON,

AUTHOR OF

"MEMORIALS OF LORD GAMBIER," "TRANSLATIONS FROM THE GERMAN OF
J. F. RICHTER," &c.

The black-winged Erinnyes
Will never enter those homes where the hands are lifted up in prayer
And the gods have accepted their offerings.

ÆSCHYLUS.

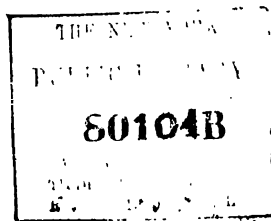


VOL. II.

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1863.

EWB



THE
HEIRESS AND HER LOVERS.



Medea. Never then, oh Love, send forth against me from thy
golden bow
The inevitable shaft when it has been steeped in impetuous passion:
But may moderation, the noblest gift of heaven, preserve me from
it;
Nor may angry altercations nor restless jealousies ever trouble
My spirit, nor may I ever be induced to envy another's lot
By awful Love; but may suitable affection be hallowed:
May the benign goddess assist with quick perception to form happy
unions.

* * * * *

Phædra. I have often in the long hours of the night ceaselessly
Reflected how depraved is the life of mortals:
And it seems to me that not by the nature of their minds
Do they commit faults, for of those who think and mean well
There are many.

* * * * *

Now there are many pleasures in life,
Long conversations, and leisure, that delightful evil.

EURIPIDES.

A FEW days afterwards, a letter came
from Honoria to Mr. Verdon, informing

him that she had accepted the Earl of Glenmaurice. "You know," wrote Honoria, "he has long been attached to me, and I have the full approval of the De Lacys, to whom I know he mentioned it. Nesta and *Morgan* seem *both* much pleased at it, and Lady Glenmaurice declared that nothing had made her so happy for a long time."

"A dash under *Morgan* and *both*, you see," observed Aunt Mary, when Mr. Verdon showed her the letter.

"No doubt, no doubt; I daresay they are both glad to have her safe out of their way," said Mr. Verdon. "Me poor girl; I can't say I feel glad to think she will be married to that old Earl; what good will all his places and parks do her? Just help to turn her head more and more, and make her forget her own kith and kin and all she ought to love, it will—and lead her into no end o' mischief. Well, well, there's no use in chafing against the bit. I suppose we shall all have to go over for the wedding: she will want to have a grand do, with rows of powdered footmen, that don't care whether she was going to be hung or



married, and in that dark, dingy church, where a dozen weddings take place every morning, and only a few beggars to see the carriages drive up, and a bishop, or it may be an archbishop, who does not care a pin about either bride or bridegroom, to read the service."

"Perhaps she will let it take place at home," suggested Aunt Mary, "for she knows that the journey will be too much for her mother."

"Indeed, an' she won't," said Mr. Verdon.

Henry O'Neil could remain only one short fortnight in Ireland, so during that time nothing more reached their ears relating to the embarrassing affair.

Aunt Mary could scarcely conceal the anxiety she felt, on taking leave of him, as to what might occur during the interval. She would have decided to accompany him over, in order to be near in case of any untoward event, but he reminded her that she would be of more use to Eva if the disclosure which they dreaded should be made.

Mr. Verdon proved to be right in his conjectures, for Honoria determined that the

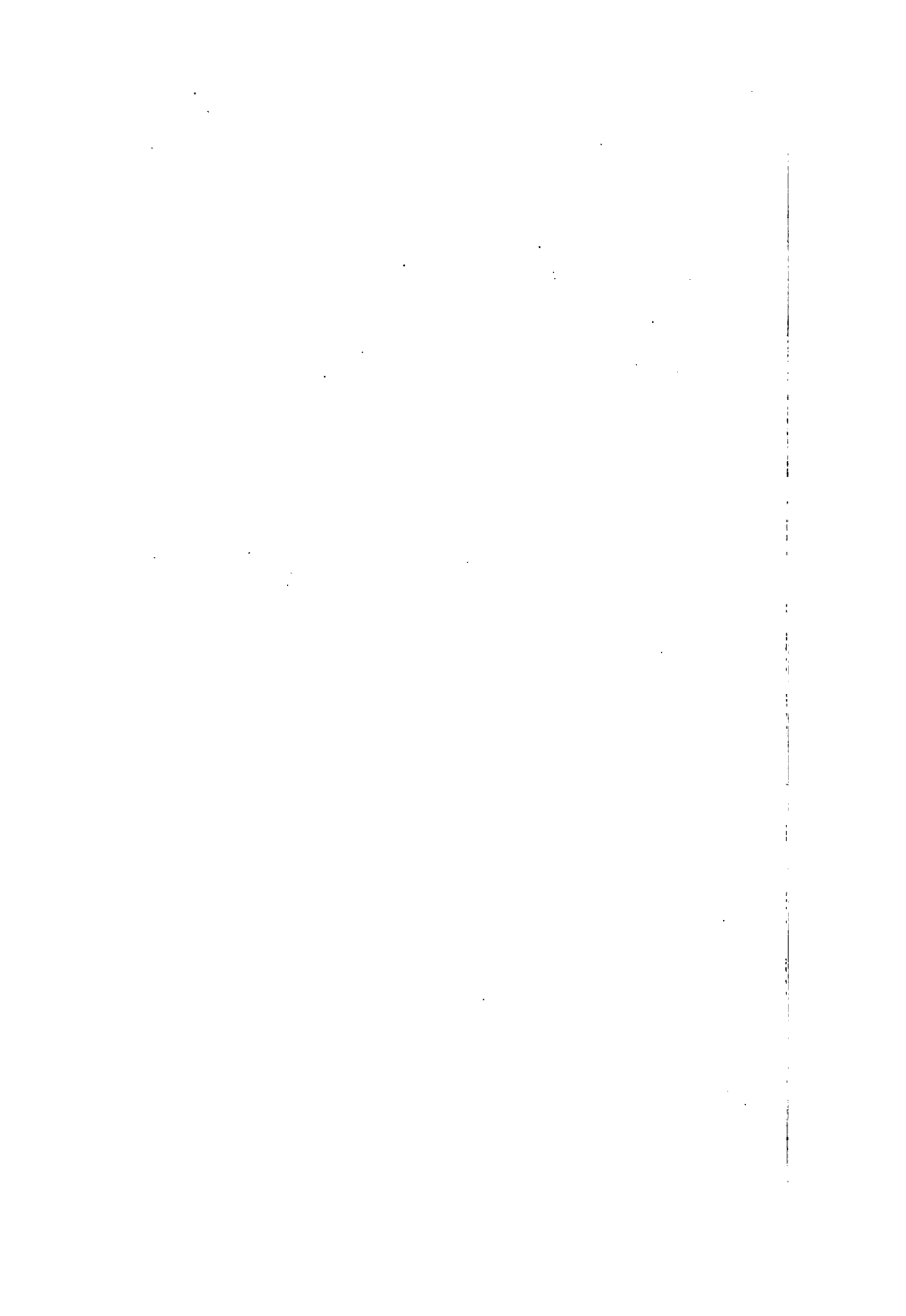
wedding should take place in London. Lord Glenmaurice had hurried on the settlements (which were magnificent, wrote Honoria) in order that the ceremony might take place before Parliament broke up. The same post brought a letter from Nesta to Eva, in great delight at the prospect of returning to Knutsford Hall, saying, "Morgan has consented to leave town in a fortnight, and then if you and Aunt Mary will come there, it will be delightful, for my doctor will not let me risk the fatigue of a sea voyage, so I must give up the hope of being in dear Ireland this year." Honoria followed Mr. Praid's advice, or rather she had attended to his threats, and it was very seldom now that any one saw her speak to Morgan O'Neil.

There was to be a grand fête at Sandridge Villa about a week before the time fixed for her marriage. Morgan told Nesta on the morning of the day that he concluded she would not go, therefore he would not endeavour to be present at the party, as there was to be a long debate at the House that night. Nesta was always glad to escape the fatigue of a party, but it

so happened that after Morgan had gone out, a young friend of hers wanted a chaperone, and begged that she would take her. It was to be the most splendid ball of the season, one of those fêtes which are never seen except at Sandridge Villa, and this young lady had with great difficulty obtained an invitation. Now, unless she could find a chaperone it would be useless. And it was so late in the day it would be impossible to look for any, so she appealed to Nesta's feelings so strongly, that she promised to accompany her for a short time, and then leave her with some friend afterwards if she should wish to remain late.

The fêtes at Sandridge Villa generally began with a large dinner-party, to which the principal grandees were invited. The Bishop of C——, who was shortly to ordain Henry O'Neil, was one of the guests.

The gardens were brilliantly illuminated, and, after dinner, some of the guests strolled out on the terrace, or wandered about in the beautiful walks. Some of the party were glad to exchange the heat and glare of the dining-room for the more shady parts of



"Oh, it is only an idle story," said Lord Dumbleton, who was sorry for having been the means of drawing attention to the scandal; "probably originated with that gossip, Jack Surtees, who often makes the worst of things."

"I hope and trust so. Lord Mowbray has a very high opinion of Mr. O'Neil; has even promised him a living in his gift, a very good living."

"I am sure there is nothing in it; and I must go and see if Di is come."

They turned towards the house and entered the brilliantly-lighted rooms. Many guests had arrived, and Lord Dumbleton soon descried Lady Di, with Nesta and her charge.

"How wonderful to see you here without Mr. O'Neil De Lacy, and, of course, he cannot come; he is tied to the House by a most important debate," said Mr. Praid. "Here comes another bride elect," he added, as Honoria rustled past. "I suppose the weddings will take place almost on the same day?"

"Not in the same place, for ours is to be in Scotland. Di likes country weddings,

village fêtes, and that sort of thing—and she is always to have her own way, you know.”

“ I hope so, indeed ; for her way will be always the right one.”

Nesta did not intend to remain late, but her charge begged so much that she would stay until the engagements with her partners were fulfilled, that Nesta consented, and walked with Mr. Praid into the gardens to get some air. They went to the same walk where the Bishop had overheard the conversation some time before, which reminded Mr. Praid to tell Nesta about it, and to ask if she knew.

Poor Nesta trembled from head to foot.

“ Yes, I know ; but I cannot, I must never tell.”

“ You know, then, Mr. O’Neil——”

“ Oh no, do not ask me, pray.”

“ Who told you ?”

“ It is impossible that I can tell you about it.”

“ Then I must ask your husband.”

“ Oh no ! that would be worse still ; pray let the matter rest.”

“ But the Bishop will make inquiries.”

"Tell him it was all a mistake; say that——"

"Hush! there are voices; they are coming near, don't speak of this any more."

The sound of voices approached nearer. They seemed to come from a lower walk, down below the terrace where Mr. Praid and Nesta were. On looking over the balustrades, they could distinguish two figures in the dim light, as they came and sat down on a bench just below, whence those above could hear what was said.

Could they be Morgan and Honoria? A few words still more distinct reached Nesta's ears, and answered the question. She plainly recognised her husband's voice, although the tones were much more soft and pleading than he had ever addressed to herself since they married. Mr. Praid heard them also at the same moment, and became convinced that his suspicions were right. He forcibly drew her away; he almost carried her to another and more illuminated part of the garden. When he arrived there, he discovered that she had fainted.

He laid her down on a garden-seat, and

hastily looked round for some one with whom he could leave her, while he went to seek for assistance. The first person who passed him was Lady Teviot, talking earnestly to some acquaintance. He implored her to remain with Mrs. De Lacy, while he went to fetch her friend Lady Diana.

The great lady became at once all sympathy and fuss, albeit in her secret heart she was much annoyed at being interrupted. Mr. Praid dashed through the suite of rooms, and succeeded at last in finding Lady Diana.

“Go quick to the bench in the south garden, where Lady Teviot is with poor Mrs. De Lacy, who has fainted, while I go and look for her husband.”

Lady Diana Myland, very sensibly, did not arrest him to make further inquiries, but taking Lord Dumbleton's arm, she proceeded to carry out immediately what he had desired her, and left him at liberty to look for Mr. O'Neil.

Mr. Praid found him exactly where he expected, laid his hand suddenly on Morgan's shoulder, and said, in a solemn voice,

"Come to your wife—I believe she is dying!"

"My wife! why, where? at De Lacy House?"

"No, here, in this very garden; and the words she heard from your lips addressed to Miss Verdon have almost killed her."

"Nesta here!" exclaimed Morgan, in real dismay. "How, why did she come?" he faltered, as he mechanically followed Mr. Praid.

Honorina immediately hurried away in another direction, and when Mr. Praid came to look for her, she was nowhere to be seen.

"Lord Glenmaurice shall hear of this also," he muttered, in a voice loud enough for Morgan to hear.

"What a fool you must be," said Morgan, "to think the old dotard will believe you."

"Perhaps not, but I consider it right to give him the chance."

Nesta had so far recovered when they found her as to be able to walk to the house, supported by Lady Diana and Lady Lawrence.

"You had better find her carriage and take her home," continued Mr. Praid, "and

for your own sake, as well as hers, make peace with your wife, or you will bitterly repent it."

Mr. Praid was glad to find that Lady Lawrence insisted on going home with Nesta, and promised not to leave her till she had quite recovered.

When they were gone, Mr. Praid was able to give Lady Diana a rapid account of the circumstances which had brought on the fainting fit.

"My poor dear Dumbleton," said she, "what an escape he has had! Thank God, I have really been of some use to him. Here he is, come to interrupt our tête-à-tête."

"Now I must try and find the Bishop," said Mr. Praid, who thought he had discovered, perhaps, a clue to the mystery of those scandalous reports. But the good Bishop had long ago gone home, and so Mr. Praid resolved to call upon him the next morning.

CHAPTER II.

Whether now, if any one should assign the choice,
Wouldst thou choose, distressing thy friends, to have pleasure thy-
self,

Or as a sharer among associates to sympathise in their sorrow ?

SOPHOCLES.

“WHAT an absurd old meddler and busy-body I am,” thought Mr. Praid, when he awoke the next morning, with a double weight on his mind. “What’s the use of my having no family, or interest of my own, as Aunt Mary says, if I must needs go and poke my ugly nose into other people’s concerns, and feel more anxious about them, too, than they do themselves, very likely ? And now, instead of remaining comfortably in bed, and having a cup of chocolate, while I look into those tempting new books, and enjoy, as Le Maistre describes, a ‘voyage au tour de ma chambre,’ I must needs get

up and walk off to Kensington, in order to trouble the peace of an easy-going and, as far as I know, sensible old Earl, who will, perhaps, not believe a word I say, or fly into a passion, and tell me it is no business of mine, and that he is old enough to know his own mind, and is quite aware what a fool he is making of himself; or, if he takes the thing as he ought, and breaks off the match, I shall have the young lady and all her family, and all the young men, and half London at my heels. Then, if I am lucky enough to get safely out of that scrape, and arrive at the Bishop's house, how will he take my interference in such a grave matter? If I tell him he must not believe a word he hears said against a young man whom I scarcely know, because I am morally sure that he is about the best young man to be found within the three kingdoms, and because his betrothed wife is an angel, and his brother hates him like poison, and therefore to clear his own character, lest the blackness of it might have induced his little wife to refuse him, has made a girl perjure herself to the priest—how will the good Bishop believe such a cock-and-bull story? If he

stirs in the matter at all he must, of course, question Morgan, the rising statesman, a fellow that all the women in London are running after; and then it will be said that his wife let me into the secret, and this, of course, would widen the breach between him and his dear little wife—that will never do. I believe I had better go to sleep again—it's only half-past eight."

He drew the bed-curtains to shade the light from his eyes, and tried to compose himself to sleep; but it would not do, his thoughts continued to disquiet him.

"Yet, how can I see a confiding old man taken in by an artful beauty, and a good young man risk the hope of a living and all his prospects in life, without stirring a step to help either? No; I must get up and see what can be done, and I'll try and do as little mischief as possible."

So he dressed, and ate his breakfast as well as he could with a mind full of imaginary conversations, speeches that were not to commit anybody, or disclose more than was actually indispensable to the people he was going to visit.

He found Lord Glenmaurice at home,

and alone. This was exactly what he had wished; but somehow, when the servant shut the door, and he found himself close to the stool which held the Earl's gouty leg, all the speeches which he had made during the tasteless breakfast vanished from his mind, for he was impressed with the idea that Lord Glenmaurice looked coldly upon him.

"We had a magnificent party last night at Sandridge Villa," he said, after inquiring about his health.

"So I hear," said the Earl, with a still more forbidding look. "Yes," he continued, "I have had a long account of it all from Miss Verdon. She and Lady Glenmaurice have just been here."

"Ah, indeed; and she told you that I saw her there?"

"Yes; she informed me of that important fact," said the Earl, with agitation, which made the stool under his leg tremble. "She told me that you misunderstood something she happened to say to Mr. O'Neil, and I was quite prepared to expect a visit from you on the subject."

"I did *not* misunderstand Miss Verdon," said Mr. Praid, who had now regained his wonted confidence and composure; "but if you are determined not to hear the truth, of course it is useless that I should speak."

"I would rather hear nothing more," said the Earl, with a weary look. "Of course, when a man at my time of life marries a young girl of nineteen, I must expect to be lectured and scolded by all my family and friends. But I am tired of hearing objections, and therefore I shall be much obliged to you if you will have the kindness to say nothing more on the subject."

"But I never before——"

"Stay, say no more; I know you mean well. I have a great regard for you, and I do not wish to quarrel. There, let us both be satisfied, and allow me to do what I confess is a foolish thing, in my own way, and say no more about it."

Mr. Praid was obliged to be satisfied; so he took his leave with a conviction that he should meet with no better success in his attack upon the Bishop.

CHAPTER III.

But in the good there is every kind of wisdom.

* * * * *

EURIPIDES.

MR. VERDON and his eldest son went to London for his daughter's wedding, but as Mrs. Verdon was too ill to undertake the long journey and sea voyage, Aunt Mary agreed to remain with her at Dingleford Castle until they returned.

Day after day passed and no letter from Henry O'Neil arrived. Eva received several letters from Nesta, and the last was written from Knutsford Hall, where she had arrived a few days before, but there was not a word about Henry O'Neil in any of them. This silence perplexed Eva, because Knutsford Hall was not far from the place where the

Bishop was to have the ordination, and she expected that Lord Mowbray would have wished that Henry should visit him at Stapleton Park.

Aunt Mary, of course, kept her fears and surmises to herself, and when Eva expressed her surprise, Aunt Mary reminded her that Nesta would, probably, know nothing of what was passing at Stapleton, although it was only five miles from Knutsford, as Morgan and Lord Mowbray had never been on good terms since Nesta's marriage.

"That's true; and Nesta never mentions him in her letters. Poor Lord Mowbray! After all his wonderful generosity, to meet with such treatment from the man he benefited! And do you know, I am sometimes afraid that Mr. O'Neil reads the letters Nesta writes, or she thinks he may chance to see them, for latterly they have been so constrained; she scarcely tells me anything except about common events. I feel sure that something has occurred to annoy her, and that she tells me nothing about it. I often fancy that I can trace imaginary lines, or rather her real thoughts, between those

she writes, but that she is afraid to put them down."

"Very likely, for I can imagine that, because he is conscious of his own shortcomings, Morgan is, perhaps, all the more inclined to be jealous of those she loves. However, that last letter from Knutsford is written in a more cheerful tone, and it must be a great comfort to find herself once more among all her own poor people, and among her own beautiful gardens and woods, for she is able to enjoy the country and appreciate lovely scenery. It is an alleviation to grief when the troubled mind and aching heart can experience this."

The next morning, when the letters were brought up to Aunt Mary's turret-chamber, she saw there was one from Henry O'Neil, and her first impression, on seeing the outside, was that it contained bad news, "Otherwise he would not have addressed his letter to me," she thought.

She hastily glanced over the contents, and found that her worst fears were realised, so far at least as his worldly prospects were concerned. She read and soliloquised as

follows: "The Bishop sent for me privately," wrote Henry, "and told me, in the kindest manner, the reports which had reached his ears, merely adding that he must ask for an explanation as to what had given rise to them. I was, of course, unwilling to throw suspicion on my brother, and therefore could not clear myself before the Bishop." (There I think he was wrong, thought Aunt Mary.) "But," he added, "as I cannot publicly clear my character from this accusation, I must resolve to release Eva from the engagement; for although she may believe in my innocence, yet, as the general opinion will be against me, I consider there is no alternative to this course." (What nonsense! unless Morgan tells, who could know?) "As far as my *own* feelings are concerned, the loss of the good living Lord Mowbray so generously promised will give me no cause for regret, for I have often experienced serious misgivings about taking upon myself the awful responsibility of a large parish, unless I could devote my whole time, with all the energies of my mind and affections of my heart to its service. And, as a married

man, I feel it is impossible to do this." (Well, I believe the boy is right there, for I think I should feel the same.) "I must, therefore, begin life over again. Probably the law would be the best profession for me."

"Well, after all, this is nothing more than I have been expecting for many months past, and if it makes any difference in Eva's feelings towards him, I have never understood the girl. Of course they cannot marry for years, for I see Henry will not accept of any assistance from Lord Mowbray, who is the only person that could help him; he keeps aloof now—will not even accept his invitation to Stapleton Park, foolish boy—but I can't help loving him for it—going to poke himself into a lodging in London, and how is he even to pay for that? Well, I must take it to Eva; but now that the blow has really fallen, it does not seem to me half so bad as I expected; I feel quite in spirits about them. Is this because it is a fine day, and I am pretty well and insensible to the prospect of their long separation? or because I feel that it is all ordered for their advantage?"

CHAPTER IV.

I cannot indeed speak well of thy fortune,
But it behoves thee, whoever thou art, to endure manfully the
dispensation of the gods.

EURIPIDES.

AUNT MARY did not find it an easy task to make other people look with the same kind of feeling upon the ruin of Henry O'Neil's prospects as she did herself.

Eva's father had received a letter from him by the same post, in which he merely said, "that objections had been started by the Bishop, and therefore he had given up his intention of entering the Church. That if Mr. Dromore wished to have a more full explanation of his reasons he would willingly give it, but hoped he would be satisfied, as he

should prefer not to enter into details which might have the effect of throwing suspicions on one whose character he was most unwilling to asperse."

"But he ought to do so—he ought not to suffer patiently the loss of his character and the total ruin of his prospects; it is wrong, positively wrong, and I am sure Father Murphy would agree with me," said Mr. Dromore to Aunt Mary.

"No, he will not agree with you, because I fancy that Father Murphy persists in believing he is guilty."

"I don't care; I am sure this should be cleared up."

"If it had occurred before Nesta's marriage," said Aunt Mary, "I should have advised this—I should have urged the necessity of clearing up the mystery. But now it is different, and I am certain that nothing would induce Henry to accuse his brother of what, if proved, would be worse in the world's estimation than the crime which is now imputed to him."

"I know he will not," said Eva, who was present during her father's conversation with

Aunt Mary ; " besides, for poor Nesta's sake, I would not wish him to do so. She has quite suffering enough without the addition of this sad discovery, and is much less able to bear sorrow than I am, on account of her delicate health."

" But the injustice," urged her father. " It is decidedly wrong to allow oneself to appear guilty."

" So it would be if he had gone into the Church, it would decidedly be wrong, but as he has given up——"

" But what right has his brother to deprive him of his living—to reduce him to beggary while he is rolling in riches himself—riches of which no imputation cast upon his character can ever deprive him: just consider this."

" It is a very hard case, certainly," said Eva, " but we must remember that both Henry and I are able to bear poverty, for we are strong—and have never been accustomed to luxuries—it will make but little difference to us, while we have each other!"

" But he has nothing, and if he will not accept any assistance from Lord Mowbray,

how can he ever afford to live while he studies the law?" inquired Mr. Dromore.

"That will be the difficulty."

"Poor Nesta's fortune has unfortunately been so foolishly settled, that O'Neil has the control over it during her life; she has nothing except pin-money, though forty-nine fiftieths of the fortune is her own."

"Yes, I know that is the case," said Eva; "we must not hope for any assistance from that quarter."

In this respect, however, their surmises proved to be wrong; for when Nesta heard that Henry had given up his intention of going into the Church, she questioned her husband so closely about the cause, and expressed so decidedly her opinion of the extreme injustice of the case, that Morgan at last reluctantly consented to her entreaty that a hundred a year should be settled upon him. She had expressed her wish that 500*l.* should be given to him as an equivalent to the living he had lost. But she saw that it would be useless to urge the case any further, and even this concession to her wishes had the effect of increasing

Morgan's dislike to his brother. His aversion seemed to become more bitter than ever. But she said nothing of this in her letter to Eva, which was evidently written for the purpose of being shown to her husband. She said that Morgan had settled 100*l.* a year on his brother to atone in some degree for the disappointment; but they saw that there was a small piece of paper which had been slipped in under the envelope after the letter had been sealed, written in great haste, saying, "You know I can easily give him 100*l.* a year more, for I cannot spend all my pin-money on my dress."

CHAPTER V.

Oh my child, not all kinds of ills does old age

Approach. But experience possesses

The power to choose more wisely than the young.

EURIPIDES.

MR. VERDON did not remain long in London. As soon as he had given away his daughter in St. George's Church, and attended the magnificent breakfast given by the Dowager Lady Glenmaurice, he started for Ireland. The honest-minded father could not conceal his feelings of regret at his beautiful daughter's marriage, although he was sure that the man she had accepted was a good, kind-hearted fellow, and that it was very fortunate that his sister-in-law the Dowager was so fond of Honoria. "The girl has quite got the blind side of the old

lady," he said to his wife and Aunt Mary, when he returned to Dingleford Castle. "She twists her round her little finger just as she likes; a very clever girl is Honoria. I had no idea she was so clever: well, poor girl, I hope she'll be happy; but, however, I can't help feeling disappointed, and I'm afraid for poor Lord Glenmaurice. However, that's his affair, as he has chosen her—he must only take the bridge as he finds it, and get over it as well as he can."

"I am glad they were to go immediately to Glenmaurice," said Aunt Mary, "for now that you have returned, I shall go to my little home at Glenmaurice Lodge, and then I shall be able to see how far they are likely to suit each other. I mean to storm Knutsford Hall on my way, however, and shall perhaps remain with Nesta for some little time, if I find it possible to do so without annoying her husband; for, besides, the anxiety I feel myself for her, Eva is so miserable about her, and Lady Lawrence gave but a bad account of her health in the last letter we received."

Eva was delighted with Aunt Mary's plan,

and felt sure that her visit to Knutsford Hall would be of use to Nesta in many ways.

So one fine evening, towards the end of July, Aunt Mary drove up to the south lodge of Knutsford Hall. She inquired of the old woman who unlocked the gate, how Mrs. De Lacy was, and whether there was a party staying at the house, and she heard to her great joy that there was nobody at home but Mrs. De Lacy, that Morgan was gone off to Ireland that very morning !

Nothing could be better timed than her visit, for she certainly had felt considerable misgivings as to the manner in which Morgan might have viewed her uninvited invasion of his house. Nesta's little boudoir, where she generally sat when alone, looked into the long avenue which led from the south lodge to the front door, and the sound of carriage-wheels at an hour which was too late for visitors, attracted her attention. So she went to the window and looked out just in time to distinguish Aunt Mary's pale face in the carriage, as it turned into the wide court-yard.

With a feeling of greater pleasure than

she had experienced for some months, Nesta hastened down stairs and traversed the long picture-gallery which led to the entrance-hall. The excitement of joyful surprise had flushed her cheek, but still Aunt Mary saw with extreme concern how thin and languid she appeared.

"How kind of you to come; I am sure the sight of your dear face will do me good, and it is particularly fortunate when I am alone, too. Morgan was obliged to go off quite unexpectedly this morning, owing to a letter he received last night from our Irish agent. I was just in the act of writing to Aunt Lawrence, to tell her of it and ask her to come, but now I shall not send, for I would rather have you to myself, and I know it would be inconvenient for her to come just now."

Aunt Mary was also better pleased to find Nesta quite alone, for she never had had much opportunity of talking to her by herself, and she, therefore, hoped to be of some little use, if there were no counter influence at work.

Nesta had a thousand questions to ask

about Eva and her sad prospects ; and was much cheered by hearing Aunt Mary's account of the resigned manner in which they bore the trial.

As the long summer days passed on, Aunt Mary had the happiness of seeing Nesta's spirits gradually revive. She began to take some interest in her gardens and paintings, and especially in her schools. There is no surer manner of making one ashamed of giving way to one's own grief or disappointment than to mix among one's fellow-creatures, and there are few occupations more calculated to inspire hope in a wearied spirit, than that of teaching little children the way to Heaven. Nesta took Aunt Mary to see her schools, and consulted her as to the best means of teaching.

"It is very difficult to excite their attention," said she one day as they walked home from a visit to a school lately built by a rich proprietor in a neighbouring parish.

"I don't much wonder at that," answered Aunt Mary, dryly. "By-the-by, it often makes me sad to see how little the bodies and senses of poor children are educated,

or rather how totally neglected all their organs of sense and some of their qualities often are, even where great efforts are made for their education. You must have observed to-day," she added, "how their poor little minds were made to work at spelling, and reading, and accounts, while their bodies were evidently suffering from being confined several hours in that hot room."

"That is true," said Nesta; "and, indeed, I have often thought that more pains are bestowed by landlords, or even clergymen, in improving the breed of pigs and poultry, than they ever seem to bestow on their tenants or pupils."

"I see you have taken my advice, and caused the bodies of your school children to be well educated. I expect that some good carvers, and modellers, and village artists, and musicians, will be found in consequence, who may tend to revive the beautiful taste displayed in mediæval times."

"I have also tried," said Nesta, "to induce them to exercise their imaginations for each other's amusement, by making one of them tell a story while they were at work. And one girl, I find, has so much talent for it,

and tells such interesting tales, that she has quite an audience around her, and it has had the delightful effect of keeping her father and some of his old friends away from the ale-house, where he before constantly went."

"And you help to exercise the imagination of the workers and carvers, I see, too, by giving prizes for the most beautiful and gracefully drawn patterns for embroidery and designs for carving."

"That was also by your advice, and also you told me never to allow them to imitate, if it could be avoided, but to try and encourage original designs in every possible way."

"And you certainly have not neglected their gymnastic training, for I have seldom seen a more athletic set than the boys who won the prizes at the fêtes last week. And their dancing was the best I have seen since I was a child."

"Ah, but all this was owing to Lord Mowbray. He began the system years ago at Stapleton Castle. So that, after all, I have done very little."

Thus Aunt Mary never suffered Nesta's mind to remain unoccupied. She roused her hopes that the child which was expected in the ensuing winter would probably be the means of awakening Morgan's affection and interest.

"Ah! if I could but be sure it would be a boy," said Nesta one day. "Morgan is so anxious for an heir, he always was, and now that he is likely to succeed to Lord Galtin-glass, it is quite a mania. It was his anxiety for my health on that account that induced him to bring me from London before the end of the season. Dr. Rogers said that if I remained there I should never recover sufficient strength before the fatal hour should arrive."

Aunt Mary's greatest hopes of the recovery, or rather of the acquirement of a happy tone of mind in Nesta, was the extreme susceptibility she evinced to the pleasure of contemplating nature. The faculty of deriving great enjoyment from the simple pleasures of the country can seldom be acquired; but if it exists at all, it can, with care, be developed into a great source

of happiness — a happiness that helps to make us almost independent of many of the minor, and some of the greater misfortunes of life. This taste or quality Aunt Mary now hoped to develop in Nesta. It had hitherto been partially checked by over-preponderance of real cares, the numerous calls for sympathy which she daily experienced; besides, the fatigue of an over-careful education had never given her the leisure which is requisite to enjoy scenery, and all the common sights and sounds, and smells of country life. All her hours had their allotted task or employment. The most careful and conscientious of governesses had given her undivided attention in school hours, and her over-scrupulous and anxious aunt had made use of all the others to instruct her in the responsibilities of her important position. In short, her mind had been overworked, and this reacted on her body.

“How I wish this evening would last for ever,” said Nesta, “that we might sit on this quiet bench, and go on looking at the beautiful sunset. I should like to arrest such moments as these. I should like to keep that

lovely sky, with its glowing colours, and the blue outline of the hills, and the delicious smell of jessamine and roses, with me for ever ; but it will all pass away, and leave us dark and cold ; like returning to the cares and anxiety of daily life, after a happy dream."

" Yes, but the impression which lovely sights produce ought to be permanent in our hearts," said Aunt Mary. " God gives us the intense enjoyment of such scenes as this to refresh and strengthen us. You should let the impression of this happiness sink deep; then in dark moments try to remember it, and you will feel less gloomy. I have often experienced the great comfort of this, as it were, filling oneself with light. Indeed, I believe it to be the chief cause of my having lived so long. Few people who have very deep feelings, and suffer intensely from the loss of those they love, could live to be old, unless the philosophy taught by revelation helped them to learn these maxims of spiritual economy, if I may so call it. It is a great responsibility to have the privilege of growing old. When I look round and see how few of my early friends and contemporaries

have been permitted to live, the question forces itself upon my mind, why have I been allowed this privilege more than they? To impress on others the lessons I have learnt," continued Aunt Mary, "to help them to bear their burdens more lightly, seem to me the obvious reasons."

"You do, indeed, help me to bear mine, and I am sure you ought to have this effect on me," said Nesta. "But I scarcely deserve to be happy," she continued. "I did not attend to Eva's warning voice, to the remonstrance of all those who loved me, but—I was infatuated—I had such a longing for happiness, and I foolishly thought that none could be found except with one person. I see now what a fatal delusion it was."

"Yes, but that is past, and he is now your husband; yet life is not over; your character even is undeveloped; you will have to learn to be happy in the feeling of having done your best. You will be obliged to atone for what was decidedly a grave fault—you allowed yourself to remain under the spell of what you must often have felt was a delusion."

"I was, indeed, often aware of this, but allowed myself to be blind."

Nesta had hitherto concealed from every one how she suffered, and had been quite reserved on the subject of her own feelings, but Aunt Mary had gradually led her to speak of all that she had undergone in different ways since she married—her sufferings from jealousy about Honoria, her fears as to Morgan's having screened himself at the expense of his innocent brother. She said that she would never have believed that he could be capable of such baseness if she had not overheard some words he addressed to Honoria in the garden at Sandridge House the last night she went to a party in London. All this she confessed with very bitter tears; and then Aunt Mary said:

"You are more likely to be of use to him if you do not blind yourself to his faults. You should pray for him lovingly, but never allow yourself to be crushed or depressed by what is now unavoidable; and do not despair even if he should show no signs of amendment. I trust you are now

convinced that there is a great deal of happiness to be found in this world, even after we have been disappointed in our dearest wishes and most ardent expectations. I consider yours the greatest trial that can be met with, but I will now give you a few of my thoughts on happiness—a kind of doctor's prescription—the result of much experience."

AUNT MARY'S ART OF HAPPINESS.

Most of our unhappiness (not our misfortunes, remember, for these are often blessings in disguise, as, I think, Richter says), but the unhappiness which often clings to us like a wet blanket, and seems to smother with its cold weight our daily and hourly well-being—most of this unhappiness proceeds from allowing ourselves to expect too much. Wishes and hopes become an amusement, and if judiciously managed, a pleasant distraction from some of the dull realities of life. I feel grateful to many of the (perhaps foolish) wishes and hopes that have buoyed me up at different periods of my life, although they never

were, and probably never will be, fulfilled. Like the pleasant dreams which sometimes visit our sleep, they leave an after-taste of happiness on the mind, although we know they can never be repeated or fulfilled—that they are but fleeting visions of the night. But beware of *expectations*. Beware of allowing ourselves to think we deserve—that we ought to have such and such a thing; that other people who deserve and who value it much less have attained in a much higher degree exactly what we want.

To those who can become convinced of the dire consequences of not attaining a constant spirit of cheerful resignation—to those who can learn from Scripture that self-knowledge which almost imparts a proficiency in the art of happiness—any lot may be made comparatively enjoyable.

There is one thing, however, which I, and I trust only a few others, suffer from, which is the most difficult of all to counteract—that is, natural and inherited low spirits. It is, however, this very suffering

which has tended to impress on my mind the necessity of cultivating cheerfulness, and looking out for enjoyment and innocent distraction among all the little daily concerns and sights of every-day life.*

* There are some good passages on happiness in a book I have lately read, by Paul Janet :

“ Un bon esprit trouvera toujours un plaisir extrême dans les pensées d'autrui. Il ne faut pas croire que ce soit là un plaisir paresseux. Pour goûter la pensée d'autrui il faut la comprendre, et pour comprendre les hommes il faut beaucoup d'efforts. C'est ce dont ne se doutent pas ceux qui jugent au hazard et lisent en courant.”—*Philosophie du Bonheur*, par Paul Janet, page 185.

In speaking of the happiness which may be enjoyed in old age, Janet says :

“ Un illustre écrivain de nos jours a laissée sur la vieillesse des pages pleines de chagrin et d'amertume ; il n'en voit que les côtés noirs et tristes. Peut-être, comme il arrive souvent, ne jugeait-il la vie humaine qu'à la lumière de sa propre vie. Peut-être était-il impossible à cette vieillesse abandonnée, désenchantée, morne couronnement d'une existence douloureuse, de comprendre la belle vieillesse antique qui, après avoir exercé dans les affaires de l'état les plus nobles facultés, se reposait majestueusement dans le doux commerce d'amitié, dans la culture des champs, dans les méditations de la philosophie.”—Page 395.

Yet of the advantages of suffering, he says :

“ Et cependant, O ! douleur ! combien l'humanité devrait te bénir et t'honorer, au lieu de t'insulter sans cesse, si elle pensait à ce qu'elle te doit ! Tu es la verge divine qui tire du roc stérile et nu les eaux brillantes et fraîches dont s'abreuve les races humaines. Tu châties et tu réveilles, tu changes l'enfant en homme, l'homme en héros, le héros en saint. Tu ouvres les âmes à de merveilleuses sympathies. Tu donnes l'enthousiasme, le courage et l'amour. Ton obscurité même a quelque chose de grand, et tu es le chemin le plus

And the cultivation of happiness (of which the principal ingredient is resignation and trustful hope, as I before said) is synonymous with the cultivation of internal and external beauty and gracefulness. True beauty cannot exist without the highest order of goodness; the mainspring of graceful movements is humility and resignation.

sur qui nous conduit au monde invisible. Le Christianisme l'a bien compris, en offrant à l'adoration des hommes un Dieu pleurant, un Dieu blessé, un Dieu mourant. C'est par la croix que le Dieu des chrétiens remonte au ciel; c'est par la douleur que la vie humaine retourne à la vie divine."—Page 417.

CHAPTER VI.

Why dost thou bound to and fro with different feelings,
And either hate or love to excess whoever it may chance to be ?

EURIPIDES.

MORGAN O'NEIL was detained nearly two months in Ireland by important business, and during part of the time he was staying with his distant relation, Mr. O'Neil of Kiloran. This old gentleman was next heir to the ancient barony of Ardfinnan, as Lord Galtinglass had lately lost the last of his sons.

Morgan's letters to Nesta were full of praises of this old man, and he expressed a hope that Mr. O'Neil might, perhaps, be persuaded to come and pay them a visit at Knutsford Hall; for, although he was very shy and eccentric, he seemed to have taken

a great fancy to Morgan, and wished to see his young wife. Therefore Nesta wrote a letter, according to Morgan's dictation, giving a most pressing invitation, and expressing the great pleasure it would give her to see him.

"I cannot help hoping that he will not come," said she, as she showed the letter she had written to Aunt Mary, "for I shall be so afraid of not saying or doing exactly the right thing."

"He is not likely to come, from Morgan's description; I should imagine that he is the kind of man who would never stir from his own house."

Aunt Mary's surmises proved correct. Mr. O'Neil wrote a very kind letter, declining the invitation, and expressing a hope that Nesta would come over and stay with him as soon as her health would allow her to cross the Channel.

Aunt Mary remained with Nesta until a few days after Morgan had arrived, and she had the satisfaction of seeing that they appeared happier together than she had anticipated. Morgan seemed to be full of real

anxiety about her health, and was quite willing to consult Aunt Mary, and follow any advice she gave on the subject. She saw, also, that the jealousy he appeared to have evinced against Lord Mowbray was wearing away, for he proposed they should drive over to Stapleton Castle one day, and he consented to Aunt Mary's request that Eva should be invited to come and stay with Nesta for some months.

"If Mrs. Dromore will consent to part with her, you should contrive to let Nesta have the great advantage of her society till after the birth of your child. Eva's presence will do her more good than all the doctors in the world."

Having accomplished all these arrangements for Nesta's comfort and well-being, Aunt Mary quitted Knutsford Hall and went to her own home at Glenmaurice Lodge.

The new-married pair had left Glenmaurice Castle before she arrived; for after remaining there about two months, Honoria found it very dull, and had persuaded her husband to spend the autumn and part of the winter in Paris.

But Aunt Mary found the Dowager Lady Glenmaurice at her house in the neighbourhood, and she soon discovered, in the course of conversation, that she was not quite so well satisfied with the young bride as she expected to have been. Lady Glenmaurice did not, however, express this opinion, for Aunt Mary saw that she scarcely liked to acknowledge to herself that she was at all disappointed in a girl to whom she had behaved with unvarying kindness, and whose worth she had always indignantly upheld even when Mr. Praid, or any other provokingly prudent friend, would put in a word of caution or blame.

Lady Glenmaurice was one of those good-natured, impulsive people, who are always taking violent fancies, and are seldom cured of the propensity even when they have often been disappointed in the objects of their inconsiderate affection. But her pride prevented her acknowledging the fact; so that Aunt Mary forbore to make any remarks, or ask any questions concerning her brother-in-law and Honoria.

"I wanted them to go to Ireland," said

the Dowager; "you know Lord Glenmaurice has a beautiful place on the other side of the Kiloran mountains, and it cannot be very far from the De Lacy property, but he has never been there except once in his life. Honoria says she will go there, perhaps next summer."

"I did not know there was any house on the property."

"A very old house; but I have heard my husband say that in his grandfather's time, they had lived there in great state."

"I should not think that Honoria would ever like to live in Ireland," said Aunt Mary, who felt a sort of vague misgiving at the idea of Honoria and Morgan ever being neighbours, or living in the same county.

"No, I suppose not, and she does not seem to like this country now, although she enjoyed so much being here last autumn, before her marriage, and she used to read to Glenmaurice, and make herself very agreeable to us all."

CHAPTER VII.

I perceive! But wealth is cowardly,
And an evil which produces the love of life.

EURIPIDES.

EARLY in the ensuing winter, the De Lacys went to London, and shortly afterwards Nesta gave birth to a daughter. If Morgan experienced the disappointment Nesta had apprehended, he contrived to conceal any indication of it, and Lady Lawrence, as well as Eva, were well satisfied with the care and anxiety he evinced about his young wife's health.

He did not take much notice of the baby certainly, but Lady Lawrence consoled herself by saying, "men never do;" and Nesta was, fortunately, so much engrossed with the new delight of having a beautiful child to

love, that she had not leisure to notice any want of interest her husband might show. Her enjoyment of her new blessing was, if possible, enhanced by the prospect she had of soon going to Ireland, instead of passing the gay season in London. She recovered all the more quickly at the prospect, for she had apprehended another long season in London very much.

Morgan promised to take her over with Eva as soon as she was strong enough to travel; and then should return to his Parliamentary duties, and run over to see them whenever he was able.

The Glenmaurices returned from Paris, and took up their quarters in London. The day before Nesta left it, they met at Lady Dumbleton's. It was the first party that she, the happy "Cousin Di," had given, and they persuaded Nesta to come.

Honorina was condescendingly gracious, and put out her hand with a kind of marked emphasis, which made Nesta feel that if she refused to do the same, the attention of bystanders would be drawn towards them.

But Nesta almost repented of having af-

forded this token of her friendship, for Honoria held her hand so long and firmly while she asked her a number of questions, that it was evident many people were watching them; for it occurred in one of those conspicuous parts of a large assembly-room to which numerous idle and curious eyes are generally directed, so that in a few minutes, everyone knew that Mrs. De Lacy was on excellent terms with the beautiful woman who had jilted her husband, and about whom many strange and some disadvantageous reports were circulated.

Some people who saw it, said Mrs. De Lacy "was a good-natured little thing;" while others maintained that she was only "blind and stupid," and that it was "charming to see how that fine creature overawed the poor little weak woman, whose fortune had caused Honoria's disappointment, and induced the man she loved to throw her over."

But Lady Dumbleton soon saw and comprehended the scene; so she walked up the the centre of the room with her high-born air and stately step, as if designedly to extricate Nesta from her unpleasant position.

"You must not stand here, Nesta," she said, drawing her friend's arm within her own, and taking both her hands; "you must come and sit by mamma on the sofa," and then she led her down the long room again to the coolest and least crowded part, and made a place for her by the Duchess.

"How rude that pert Lady Dumbleton has grown," said Honoria to Lady Teviot, who was smiling at her discomfiture. "You will have to take her down, I think."

"Yes, we will see what can be done, my dear. I often think rank is becoming quite vulgar."

Nesta was glad to see a few of the old friends, who, like the Dumbletons and Mr. Praid, always made her feel happy when they met; but still she saw enough, even that evening at Dumbleton House, to make her feel still more thankful that Morgan had consented to her departure from London, and she looked forward with a bound of joy to the prospect of arriving at Carrigroghan with her pretty baby and Eva.

CHAPTER VIII.

Whose cry came from the neighbouring dells?

SOPHOCLES.

AGAIN it is the merry month of May, and Nesta is playing with her beautiful child on the terrace at Carrigroghan. Morgan had come over to see her during the Easter holidays, and had taken her to visit Mr. Roland O'Neil at his fine old place Kiloran.

The old gentleman seemed much pleased with her, and begged to be godfather to the next child, if it were a boy. "I must live to see an heir to the old barony," he said in her ear, "and the rogue shall have all these broad lands, so you must give me a fine brave heir to revive the ancient glories of our renowned family." Morgan was, of course, much gratified at this, and the letters which, after he returned to London,

he often wrote to his wife, were full of kind expressions and anxious inquiries about her health.

Nesta was expecting Eva that fine May evening (she could not come every day, because her father was ill), and the young mother, strong in her renovated health and happiness, was carrying her child along the walk to meet her friend.

Eva always came from the Rectory by a short cut through the woods, and then entered the garden by a little gate, of which she kept a key. There was a rustic seat close to this gate, and Nesta sat down to rest, and admire the flowers which grew in great profusion. She picked some, and strung them together in wreaths and garlands to the baby's great delight, and absorbed in this pleasant employment, she did not notice the lengthening shadows, or become aware that it was much later than the time at which Eva generally came.

The child was crowing in its glee, as Nesta wound the gorgeous chain round its little neck, when suddenly a laugh sounded in her ear, and the next moment she saw a face—two dark eyes fiercely regarding her and the child with a strange expression of

mingled anger and wonder. Again the laugh sounded, ending in a sort of discordant shriek.

There was something so strangely riveting in the wild fierce look of these large eyes, that it was some moments before Nesta became aware that they belonged to a tall woman with a red hood over her head, and that she stood with her arms leaning over the low wall close to the gate.

Nesta caught up her child with a strange feeling of horror and dread, and was hurrying away when the figure beckoned to her with her hand, and with a look half of menace and half of entreaty, cried with a loud voice, "Come here, and show me the baby; I want to see the O'Neil's child. Ha! so it's frightened she is—the grand lady; it's frightened she is—the Lady of Carrigroghan—and turns away from the prayer of the poor and needy. But ye shall not escape me. Ha! ha!" she added, shaking her head with a threatening gesture; "the deserted and lonely, the despised and forsaken, will work her will on the proud lady, though she now sleeps upon a bed of satin and down, and walks upon silver and gold, and has all the best in the land at her beck and call. Ha!

ha ! ye may run away like a poor frightened wounded bird, but we shall meet again."

Nesta retreated as fast as she could, but she was so terrified that she could scarcely run.

The figure remained motionless in the same attitude, still leaning over the low wall, and when Nesta at length reached the terrace, she could still distinguish the tall form and red cloak under the shade of the beech trees.

Nesta was now near enough to be heard from the house, she called loudly, rushed in through the drawing-room window and rang the bell, but she never stopped to rest till she had arrived safely up in the nursery, and given the child into the nurse's arms.

"What's come over ye? ye're as pale and trembling as a water-lily," said the good Irish nurse, who was a privileged person, for she was daughter to the old woman who had nursed Morgan O'Neil.

Without waiting to explain, as soon as the child was safe in the nurse's arms, she returned and sent the butler to see who the strange creature was. He and the garden people, who had been alarmed by Nesta's cries, all ran to search for her, but could

find no one either in the garden or the wood.

"It must have been a banshee," said the Irish gardener.

"More likely a beggar," said the English butler.

They searched all through the wood and shrubberies, but no one could be found.

This seemed most strange, for Nesta had seen her standing perfectly still when she reached the terrace, and had remarked that she even did not appear inclined to move when last she saw her, before entering the house.

"Then it really must be a banshee, for no flesh and blood could have hid away so quickly," muttered the gardener.

It was now almost dark, yet Eva had not arrived. Nesta sent one of the servants through the wood by the path by which she generally came, and directed him to "beg that Miss Dromore would come to her as soon as possible."

She could scarcely account for the extreme horror and dread which the sight of that mysterious stranger had inspired, and this vague mysterious awe seemed to increase rather than diminish, as she recalled

the menacing expression of those wild lustrous eyes; and the unearthly light, the strange brightness, which, as they first glared on her, seemed to prevent her from seeing anything else, now haunted her with ever increasing horror.

At one moment she thought the woman was mad, at others, a still more horrible suspicion made her blood run cold. "I want to see the O'Neil's child." Could it be the Widow O'More's daughter—the mother of that beautiful boy she had seen in Glenfinlan?

On sending to the Rectory it appeared that Eva had been unexpectedly detained, and was in the act of writing to explain the reason when the servant arrived, but on hearing of the strange appearance which had frightened Nesta, she determined to go and pass the night with her friend. Mr. Dromore insisted on accompanying her to see what had really occurred, for they could make nothing of the account given by the servant. They found Nesta in the nursery, for she could not bear to lose sight of her child for a moment. She could not banish the impression of those flashing eyes which she described to Eva, and which had gleamed

with such a menacing expression at the baby. Eva endeavoured to soothe her fears; she slept in her room, and the baby's little cot was placed close to the bed. They saw that all the doors were barred in every part of the house, for Nesta was full of terror lest that strange figure should be able to secrete herself somewhere in the house. In spite of all these precautions she scarcely slept at all; in the morning renewed search was made; Mr. Dromore went up to Glenfinlan at Eva's request, to see whether old Mrs. O'More could be prevailed upon to tell where her daughter was, and whether she was alive or not. But the old woman indignantly disclaimed all knowledge of her daughter. He then went to Father Murphy, in hopes he might be able to throw some light on the affair, and described the appearance of the woman. But he said he had never seen that girl for two years, and knew of nobody answering the description given by Mrs. De Lacy.

The good father did not seem to think that the popular belief in banshees was quite without foundation, and mentioned some strange stories which he fully believed were authentic.

Nesta's bedroom was in the upper story of the modern house, which had been added to an older portion, and one of its three large windows opened upon the roof of the more ancient part. This angle of the large pile of building was built on a rock, which rose abruptly from the river, so that two of the windows looked straight down into the torrent which wound round two sides of the house, and made a sudden bend round that corner.

The windows which opened to the river had iron bars to prevent the possibility of falling out; but the third, which opened on the leads, had no bar, and only a shutter, which was not often fastened, as it was supposed no one could enter the room by that window.

Time passed on, winter arrived, and brought no tidings of the mysterious woman. Nesta tried to amuse herself, and distract her mind, by taking an active share in the preparations for Eva's wedding. Henry O'Neil had been reading so hard in law, and was considered from his natural abilities so likely to prove successful in his new profession, that Mr. Dromore had consented to their marriage. It was to take

place at Carrigroghan, and they were afterwards to proceed to London, and live in a little lodging Henry had engaged for them. Morgan wrote to Nesta to say that he was afraid he could not come over to attend the wedding; but Henry said in a letter to Eva that his brother looked as coldly upon him as ever when they chanced to meet in the street.

The wedding was not what is called gay, but seldom does it happen, in this intentionally trying world, that a blessing was pronounced over two more loving hearts, or that the union of temper and taste was so well calculated to make each other and every one around them happy. There was a fête given for the poor of Carrigroghan and the school children, by Nesta, and Irish jigs, and other old dances, were performed with great glee. The really happy pair started in the evening of the day for England. Eva had the gratification of seeing that Nesta's health and spirits were so much improved that she was able to leave her without any apprehension, and looked forward to meeting in London, after her next confinement.

The day after Eva's wedding Nesta was walking on the terrace of Carrigroghan with her child. It was a fine winter's morning,

and she strolled on to the farther end of the terrace. From this spot could be seen the beech-grove and low wall where the mysterious figure had stood. The child looked round, clapped its little hands, and laughed. But, mingled with this sound, so sweet to the young mother's ears, there was another mocking laugh in the distance, which made her tremble with dismay. With a fascinated feeling of horror she turned towards the spot, and then she distinctly saw the figure with the red hood, in the same attitude, leaning over the low wall, as before. Pressing the child closer in her arms, she ran towards the house, and shrieked for help.

A gardener, who was at work at the farther end of the terrace, heard her cries, and immediately came to her assistance. Other servants who happened to be also within hearing appeared, and she despatched them in search of the woman with the red hood; but again no traces of the mysterious figure could be found.

The strange terror which the sight of that figure excited on her mind was increased by the still more mysterious disappearance of it, and she felt that her child was not safe even up in its own nursery. So she wrote to Morgan, and related the story, described

the strange and unaccountable fears which she experienced, and implored him to come and take her away from Carrigroghan. He replied, in a very kindly-worded letter that Mr. O'Neil of Kiloran was very anxious that her son should be born in Ireland, and he therefore hoped that she would endeavour to vanquish her fears, which every sensible person must confess were unreasonable. He explained that many of the poor Irish had very strange ways of expressing their feelings, and that their wild gestures and looks were perhaps enough to terrify those who had not been brought up among them. That the woman very probably had come from the wild mountains of Galtee More, where among a lawless set of illicit spirit distillers, and Peep o' Day Boys, the O'Neil's name was still venerated, and that she may really have come for the purpose of seeing the O'Neil's child as she seemed to have declared, though somewhat rudely, to Nesta herself, at the first interview; but, as she did not probably wish to be recognised, and give any clue to her husband's or her own illegal doings, she may have contrived, by her knowledge of the short cuts and mountain passes, to have eluded all the search

which the servants and garden people at Carrigroghan instituted.

"These mountaineers," he wrote, "are so fleet, and possess such wonderful agility in climbing up places which others would consider to be completely inaccessible, that she may possibly have climbed up a tree, or dived down into some cave or hollow, and there concealed herself in safety till the search was over."

Nesta, therefore endeavoured to persuade herself that her fears were exaggerated, and as Morgan held out hopes of being able to come very soon, she determined, although reluctantly, to remain at Carrigroghan.

CHAPTER IX.

Trouble adds toil to grief.

* * * * *

Troubles in abundance and nothing else to be seen.

SOPHOCLES.

THE following week Morgan arrived; he appeared glad to see her, and took so much notice of the little girl, that she felt happier than she had yet done since her marriage. He drove her out every day in a little pony carriage, and showed her many beautiful places in the neighbourhood which she had never yet seen.

A few weeks before the time of her confinement Morgan went to spend some days with old Mr. O'Neil. The following day her little girl became very ill, and Nesta sent off in extreme haste for a physician.

The doctor said it was only a slight childish ailment, so Nesta tried to make light of it, but next evening she fancied the child

seemed rather worse. However, the nurse did not appear at all alarmed, and the young mother went to bed, endeavouring to tranquillise and reason away her fears.

During Morgan's absence the child slept in a little cot close to her bedside, and she watched for some time its beautiful little sleeping face, and the graceful attitude which baby hands so often assume. It seemed to be sleeping peacefully. Yet Nesta could not succeed in discarding a vague terror, which seemed to gain increased hold on her as she lay awake during the long hours of that dark night.

At last she sank into a sound sleep; but in her dream she fancied she saw the mysterious figure with the red hood. And she woke with a horrible conviction that it was near—that the figure was actually in the room. The night-light had gone out and all was darkness, except the faint glimmer from the window opposite her bed.

Then she fancied she heard a sound like breathing, nearer still, and there was a feeling in the air as if something moved. With horror she was convinced the air was stirring round her child's cot, yet she was paralysed by a sort of waking nightmare, and seemed

unable to move. Then she felt as if there was a footstep at the bottom of her bed, and the next moment she saw a shadow cross the window—it certainly was a figure—tall and with a hood just like the mysterious stranger—it slowly passed across the faint starlight.

But her child—was it safe? She felt softly in the cot, and passed her hand gently over its little face, afraid of disturbing it, for the doctor said sleep was so necessary for it, and a narcotic had been given by his advice. She tried to remind herself that the nurses were sleeping in the outer room, and that no one could possibly enter her room except through theirs. It must have been a fancy of her excited imagination, she thought, and wearied with the sleepless and anxious hours she had passed, she sank to sleep again, and did not wake until the sun was shining brightly in at the eastern window. This was the window that looked out on the leads, and to her surprise she saw it was partly open.

Suddenly her midnight horror recurred to her mind, but as the child seemed still sleeping peacefully, she felt reassured, and she would not disturb it. Soon after, the

nurse came in, and drawing aside the curtains of the little cot, she looked rather anxiously at the sleeping child, then passed her hand over its face; with a look of horror she snatched it up, held it to her bosom, uttering a piercing shriek.

Nesta started up, and took it from her arms, then she felt that it was quite cold.

The child was dead!

CHAPTER X.

Such is the condition of this life, that if any one reckon
Upon two days or more, he is rash,
For truly there is no morrow, ere he pass well through the present
day.

SOPHOCLES.

DOCTORS were sent for from all parts of the country. Some said the child had died from an overdose of narcotic, others that it seemed to have died from convulsions, owing to its teeth. Nesta clung convulsively to the little form, and would not suffer it to be taken from her arms. She seemed to be scarcely aware that life was extinct; yet she saw what had escaped the notice of the doctors and the nurses—the mark of two fingers on each side of its little throat. She showed these marks to the doctor who had always attended her in Ireland. He contrived to take the child from her, and then he became aware that the marks of two fingers were, indeed, plainly discernible.

The house was immediately searched, but there was no entrance to her room except through one where two nurses slept, the door of which was always locked at night. Nesta herself remembered having seen it was locked just before she went to bed that night.

But the open window on the leads? There appeared no possibility of escape that way, yet it was in that direction she fancied the figure went. The nurses had found their door locked as usual, and nothing seemed to be disturbed in any part of the house. But from the leads near the east window an old buttress with its giant steps led down to the rock above the river—could any one climb up and down that way? Morgan said it was impossible, and added, besides, "What motive could any one have to murder the poor babe?" And though they searched everywhere no traces of an intruder could be found. Nesta was too ill to explain her strange vision of the night, but the fright and grief brought on a premature confinement, and a few days after she was delivered of a stillborn daughter. For weeks her life was almost despaired of.

As soon as she could bear the journey, Morgan took her to Mr. O'Neil's place at Kiloran, and afterwards wished her to see London doctors. The hope of seeing Eva once more seemed to be her only wish—all her interest in life seemed gone—the child had been her all, and she returned to her old listless languor, which made her friends think she would never recover. Even the short journey to Kiloran seemed to be too much for her strength, and she was carried from the carriage to the old state bedroom, which had been prepared for her reception. This apartment had not been occupied since a Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland had slept there, fifty years before; but the old housekeeper, who was fortunately a sensible woman, had caused it to be well aired, and tried to give the ancient furniture as comfortable an appearance as its splendour would allow. But she shook her head ominously when all was done, and she had seen Neta carried up the "big black oak staircase" into it.

"It's thinking I am the lady would feel more homelike in the chintz bedroom, where Master Cormick died and where their mother was laid out."

"Lor', Mrs. O'Flaherty," said one of the housemaids, "sure it's always thinking o' dying ye are, and there's no saying but what ye'd make an illigant corpse yerself, for you're as fine a featured woman as is to be seen in all the four kingdoms, and no doubt it's a fine wake ye'll have, too, and plenty o' dancing, and singing, and keening."

Mrs. O'Flaherty was noways hurt at this allusion from her fellow-servant, for it is the chief ambition of the Irish peasant to be a fine corpse, and have a noisy, if not mirthful, wake. She continued to make her comments on the poor sick lady, while she was superintending Molly O'Leary's cooking of the "grand dinner."

"Och, then, I fear it's not long the poor darlint will be in any room at all, for sure it's faint marks her poor thin figure makes on the beautiful down bed, for I do think her heart is gone to heaven already—she looks just as if she'd no more wish or care in this sinful world."

"No wonder," said Molly, "by the same token, if all is true Pat Ryan tells as how Mr. Morgan——"

"Hush, don't speak a word agin him,

and see, you are letting the soup boil over ; it's smoked it will be."

"Oh, never fear, sure 'tis I knows how to make the raal soup ; wasn't I taught by old Lord Galtinglass's head cook, and sure the Lord-Lieutenant himself couldn't make better soup than what I sent up to the quality at Mr. Cormick's burial feast."

"The Lord-Lieutenant ! and sure it's a born idiot you are for thinking as his Excellency would demean hisself to make soup, or do any work at all at all."

Nesta was scarcely conscious enough to be struck by the appearance of the room. Tired with her journey, she slept well on the state bed, with its high dais and nodding plumes, and awoke next morning glad to have left the scene of so much sorrow and suffering. She was not so wholly absorbed in her own misery as to be unable to think of others, and was, therefore, grieved to find that old Mr. O'Neil was much prejudiced against Henry. She intended, of course, to explain, but a warning look from her husband, and a few words in private when next he had an opportunity of speaking to her alone, convinced her that she must be silent. There was the old threaten-

ing look, the hard pressure of the hand, the cold, resolute, dark expression, which had terrified her so much during the first year of her marriage. When she wished to ask why he had such a dislike to his brother, he warned her never to mention his name if she wished to be permitted to see Eva again.

"Remember, if you ever mention his name to me or Mr. O'Neil, Eva is banished from your house for ever."

Nesta's only hope, on recovering sufficiently to go to London, was to have again the sight and companionship of Eva, so of course she scrupulously complied with his commands, but it was most painful to remain silent when Mr. O'Neil blamed Henry: she felt it was a tacit acknowledgment that the infamous stories against him were true, and that she was helping to mislead the old man entirely with regard to his character. This was so trying to her, that it was quite a relief when the day of departure arrived.

"Now, me dear child, you are getting well and strong, and you must come over next summer and have a fine healthy boy."

"Yes that she will," said Morgan, "and

I am going to finish the restorations of the old castle of Dermot, which I have already begun—where she first saw me jump over the chasm—for she has seen some banshee at Carrigroghan that has frightened her out of her wits. Besides, there is an old prophecy, that the child born in the Black Tower of Dermot is to be the greatest of all the O'Neils, so that I am determined that no expense shall be spared to make it worthy of the event."

Nesta smiled faintly, for she remembered that it was a fatal day for her when she visited first the old ruined castle! But it was all her own doing, and she must bear the heavy burden she had wilfully wished to carry: she must bear it, and cheerfully, to the end.

"Quite right, my dear boy, and I'll come to the christening there, and we'll make the old hall ring with joy, and we'll have all the pipers in the counthrey, and jigs that'll try the soundness of the oak floors, and whisky enough to fill Bantry Bay, and bonfires that will be seen from Cape Clear to the Giant's Causeway, and from the north to the south pole; that we will."

CHAPTER XI.

But for thee, who hast fallen into involuntary error,
There is a mitigation of anger which it behoves thee to meet.
SOPHOCLES.

THEY reached London by easy stages, but Nesta was much worse from the fatigue of travelling. Dr. Rogers looked anxious, and in reply to Lady Lawrence and Eva's eager questions, said it was a difficult case. Her mind seemed to have received some great shock, which, added to the weakness caused by a premature confinement, rendered the prospect of her complete recovery very uncertain.

"If she could be constantly amused, and never suffered to be anxious about anything, there might be hope. There is something which she does not like to tell, something dreadful which occurred that haunts her, and yet she shrinks from revealing it; and I advise you," he said to

Eva—"I advise you not to let her explain it, unless you fancy that it is absolutely necessary, for it is advisable to guard against anything to excite her; for the look of horror that came over her face, when I ventured to speak of the illness of her little girl, was quite appalling."

"You know that she imagines the child was murdered by some woman."

"Yes, I heard this, and that every search was made for the culprit; and that no one could have got into her room except through the nurses', and their door was locked. Are you sure of the nurses?"

"Oh, yes; besides, they could not have any motive or reason for disliking her or the poor child. She has no suspicion of them herself, I know, and the head nurse, who was devoted to the child, was an old servant of excellent character."

"It might possibly have been done in a state of somnambulism by one of the two nurses," said the doctor. "I have known some very strange acts done by people walking in their sleep, which have come under my experience."

"Would travelling abroad be of use to Mrs. De Lacy?" asked Eva.

"I doubt it," he replied, "the principal thing for her is to be with those she loves. Her mind is more affected even than her body, and, therefore, no change of air or scene would avail unless her affections can be roused."

On consulting Nesta herself, they found that she would prefer to remain in London that year, as long as Eva was obliged to be there; and she said that if she lived till the end of the season, she would go to Ireland for the birth of the infant they hoped to have, for she saw that Morgan was anxious to please old Mr. O'Neil, who had set his heart on the fulfilment of his plan. She gradually became stronger, but shrank from all society except that of a few intimate friends, such as Lady Dumbleton and Mr. Praid. Morgan evinced great kindness, and was very anxious to try and amuse her as much as possible. The chief event of her now monotonous life, was the birth of Eva's child, which happened in June. It was a fine boy, with the large and peculiarly black resplendent eyes of the O'Neils.

Eva had been afraid that the sight of her baby would recal painful recollections in Nesta, and her surprise and delight were

great when Nesta evinced real pleasure at the sight of it and smiled—the first genuine spontaneous smile that had been seen on her countenance since the loss of her own child—while with an eager and almost bounding gladness, she pressed the little one to her heart. “Thank God for this,” she said to the delighted mother. “Now I think—I hope I may recover.”

This young heir presumptive to the ancient race of O’Neil and barony of Ardfinnan was born in a small house, in a dark street, in the neighbourhood of Lincoln’s Inn. Henry and Eva’s only retainer was a maid-of-all-work. But Nesta insisted on sending for her own nurse to attend on her friend, and, of course, every luxury and comfort that the sick-room required, was procured by Nesta.

“Promise me not to be annoyed—not to be hurt—if Morgan evince any annoyance, or make any observation about it, for, please God, now you will get strong, and will have a son of your own.”

“I fear not,” said Nesta, “there is some fatality against it, some curse——”

“Oh, no; it is wrong to give way to secret fears, quite; it is, indeed. I wonder you don’t read over Aunt Mary’s receipt for

happiness. It has often done me real good when I have been inclined to be dissatisfied with our poverty, or depressed by any of those little *contretemps* that will come, when there is no money to remedy small misfortunes with."

As soon as Eva could venture out, Nesta used to drive her and the baby to Kensington Gardens and other places, and the pleasure and interest of doing so had a beneficial effect on Nesta, so that her friend had the gratification of seeing that her health decidedly improved. Morgan had continued to be kind; he was, of course, much occupied with Parliament; and Nesta seldom heard of his going to parties, but only that he "just looked in on his way home." As she only saw her real friends, they contrived to keep her in complete ignorance of certain rumours which coupled his name with that of the beautiful Lady Glenmaurice.

One morning the two friends met Honoria taking an early walk in Kensington Gardens, accompanied by her nurse and two children. She came up to Nesta as soon as she saw her, and Nesta was surprised, and perhaps pleased, at the visible alteration there was in her manner. The hard and defiant look with

which she used always to regard her, seemed changed ; her large eyes shrank with a self-accusing expression when Nesta raised hers and looked up with a melancholy but not reproachful gaze ; and she said in a voice whose hitherto harsh tone was softened, " I was very sorry to hear you have been so ill." Then turning to Eva, she added, " You look as lovely, as brilliant as ever ; and what a beautiful baby you have got." Then, without pointing out either of her own, she hurried away.

" Those were beautiful children ; both boys, I think," said Nesta, when she was out of hearing. " I dare say she wished to be kind in not showing them to us."

" Yes ; probably she thought they might have recalled your loss."

During the following days they often met Lady Glenmaurice's children, but they did not see herself again. The eldest was about two years old. One day it ran up to Nesta as she sat on a bench, and looked up in her face.

" Oh, Eva," she said, turning pale, " how like those black eyes are to—to—do you remember the child at Glenfinlan ?"

" Yes," replied Eva, with confusion. " You

know I have before remarked that Honoria's eyes were very like—like the O'Neils'."

"Yes, so you have; that south of Ireland eye, with its southern, passionate expression."

Nesta caressed the child, and her trembling lips imprinted a kiss on its little forehead, where a tear also fell. The child put out its arms as if to try and comfort the sad lady with that strange kind of sympathy sometimes shown by children.

"I am sure they see and know more than we imagine," said Nesta. "I am certain that my poor baby had a knowledge I did not possess, for it kissed me so much more that last night than usual. I could scarcely disengage its little arms from my neck. Oh, that I had not tried to do so! Oh, that I had kept it safe in my bosom! Then that fiend, that terrible woman——"

"Pray don't; you must not talk or think of this," said Eva; "you know Doctor Rogers said it is so wrong, it is quite suicide."

"Very well, I will not," said Nesta; and with a great effort she tried to assume a cheerful look.

"And now that you have a prospect of

another, too, dear Nesta—remember this, and look forward with hope to happier days.”

The time was approaching when they would have to go to Carrigroghan, but whenever the place was mentioned Nesta’s countenance assumed such an expression of fear that Morgan had made a determination that some rooms should be prepared at Dermot Castle; and, to ensure this most desirable end, he gave directions that nothing should be spared, that at any cost a suite of apartments must be ready for his wife.

CHAPTER XII.

Unrequited may he perish who does not honour his friends
By unlocking his mind and laying bare to them its guileless
Intricacies. May I indeed never have such a friend.

EURIPIDES.

MORGAN intended to have given Nesta an agreeable surprise on her arrival in Ireland. He wished to keep the restorations he had made in the old castle a secret until he drove her up to the ancient gateway of Dermot Castle instead of taking her to Carrigroghan. But Eva saw that she shuddered with such terror when the house was mentioned where she had suffered so much misery, that Morgan thought it would be better to tell her that he had succeeded in arranging that a few rooms in Dermot Castle should be sufficiently advanced for their habitation. Nesta was pleased at this intelligence, and thanked Morgan with gratitude for the effort he must have made to

accomplish it. There was as yet scarcely any accommodation for their large establishment, therefore they were only to take two servants besides Nesta's maid and the nurse to Dermot Castle, while the rest of the servants were to be sent to Carrigroghan. Eva was to travel with her round by Holyhead. Morgan was already gone by Bristol to superintend the preparations at Castle Dermot. Henry would not be able to leave town for some weeks: he could scarcely allow himself any holiday, but hoped to come over later and fetch his wife, if possible.

It was one of those stormy and sunshiny days peculiar to Ireland when the travellers reached the narrow glen that led to Castle Dermot. A gleam of sun shone beneath a black storm-cloud on the ancient walls when they first came in sight, but before they reached the new road which Morgan had made, that wound up by a gentle ascent to the castle, all was gloomy shadow; and the dark towers and projecting battlements seemed to frown upon the travellers as they approached. The old drawbridge, which formerly spanned the narrow cleft of rocks overhanging the torrent that rushed far below, had been restored; and

as the carriage passed over it, and entered the dark archway, the loud clanging echo and sudden darkness almost terrified Nesta, so that it was a relief when they entered the open court-yard.

They found Morgan awaiting their arrival on the broad steps which led up to a magnificent doorway, and then Nesta gazed with astonished admiration at the pile of building. The outer walls of three sides of the quadrangle were nearly finished, and Morgan pointed out to her the intended banquetting-hall, with its high mullioned windows, which were to be filled with painted glass.

He had contrived to have the library ready and filled with choice books, also a boudoir for herself, with an oriel window projecting over the perpendicular rocks, and looking straight down into the river; but it also commanded a lovely view through the glen into the valley, and far away to the mountains of Shievedhue. There was also a dining-room and a suite of sleeping and dressing apartments for Nesta and her expected child.

Eva was, of course, going to her father's house, which was only about five miles dis-

CHAPTER XIII.

Let not good things seem to thee always bitter,
Nor when in prosperity imagine thyself to be miserable.
EURIPIDES.

THERE were very few neighbours near Nesta's present home, for except the Verdon family at Dingleford Castle, Carrigroghan was the nearest house to Castle Dermot, and as there was no road through the glen, the only access to it was through the village of Carrigtown by land, or Dingleford Bay by water. But a few people who had houses at all within distance made a point of calling at the castle, and as it was not less than from ten to fourteen miles distant from any of them, Nesta thought it necessary to be at home to them when they chanced to come, and even if she happened to be out she left orders that the visitors should be admitted, and that luncheon

should be offered to them while their horses rested.

One day, towards the end of October, Mrs. and Miss O'Malley came from Glendallock, which was at the foot of the Shievdhue mountains, sixteen miles off. Nesta had never seen them before, but Mrs. O'Malley said she had known her mother intimately in her youth. She was a fat and somewhat vulgar-looking woman, with a good rich brogue, but without any pretensions whatever; and when Nesta remembered that those kind eyes had once looked on her own dear mother, her heart warmed towards the broad honest face, with its wide mouth and red cheeks. Nesta replied that it always gave her pleasure, to see one who had known her mother, and therefore she regretted that there was no spare room which she could offer her visitors for the night.

"Oh, I could not have done that," said Mrs. O'Malley. "I am accustomed to the distance, because I often cross the Glendalla Pass, and go over to see our new neighbours at Maurice Court, the Lord Glenmaurice and his beautiful wife. They are all in brick and mortar too, and have no spare room.

You would like to see the old place renovated, and I am very glad to see the young ones are taking so to Ireland. You must have known Lady Glenmaurice, I should think, as she came from Dingleford Castle."

"Yes," said Nesta, "I know her very well, but I had not heard they were in Ireland."

"How strange, for I saw Mr. O'Neil De Lacy there one day."

Nesta could scarcely conceal her surprise at this intelligence, but she made a great effort to appear calm, and said with well-assumed cheerfulness, "Ah, I suppose he forgot to tell me, for he has been so much occupied with all these improvements, the marble works, and the drainage, that he has commenced near Shievedhue, and——"

"Ah, sure enough he can't have much time for gossip, and what a beautiful place he has built too. This will take the shine out of Maurice Castle, although that is mighty fine, and they've built a tower up on the mountain just at the back of the house. Look! I should think if you had a good telescope you could see it from here."

There was an excellent telescope in the

library through which Nesta often looked at the stars, and she had felt more grateful to Morgan for this proof of his recollection of her favourite study than for anything else in the castle. Mrs. O'Malley arranged the glass to her eye, and when she found the tower she uttered a cry of delight: "Sure I see it as plain as a pikestaff; and there's the heap of stones alongside."

"What a splendid view there must be from that height," said Nesta, when she had looked at the spot.

"Indeed then there is, but it's so rough and steep to climb up, I never was there but once. So I hear you're going to be confined in this castle, and that there is an ancient prophecy that the O'Neil that's born here in the Black Tower of Dermot is to be the greatest of his family. Lady Glenmaurice told me this, and she said she was so anxious you should have a boy now, for you had several disappointments before."

"Did she tell you this?" inquired Nesta, with a surprise which she was unable to conceal.

"Sure and she did, and she's going to have one herself soon, too; she hoped it would be a girl, for she's already two boys.

And now my dear young lady you must let me order the carriage; but I'll come back and see you again some fine day, for you've got your mother's sweet face; you look just as she did when she came to Carrigroghan the year before she married, and I have never seen her since."

As the time drew near, Morgan became still more anxious to provide for Nesta's comfort, and seemed to study her wishes in every possible way. He had consulted her about the nurse, and suggested that she might possibly object to the same she had before. He suggested that the woman might recal sad thoughts, perhaps, and said that she herself fancied that Nesta had better not see her, but expressed a wish to be near in case of any sudden emergency, for she had so much experience in that kind of illness. She moreover recommended another, with whose character she was thoroughly acquainted. Nesta liked the woman extremely; she knew, besides, that she was deeply attached to Morgan, and was devoted heart and soul to the O'Neil family, regarding them as the descendants of the ancient kings of Ireland. Therefore she replied that she would rather see her, and

that if she felt that it would affect her, she would tell her of it. Consequently Mrs. O'Sullivan came, and Nesta was glad to find that the sight of her honest sympathising face produced no other emotion than a kind of mournful gratification, which was beneficial rather than otherwise.

Morgan O'Neil met Mrs. O'Malley a few weeks after her visit to Castle Dermot, and she told him that she had seen the tower through his telescope, and gave him many charges to be careful of his dear little wife.

"You should try and amuse her," said Mrs. O'Malley; "you should remember she has got no sister or relation with her; you should be careful to tell her all the gossip you can pick up. I am afraid you allow business to engross too much of your attention and time, for I find that you never told her that her old friend, Lady Glenmaurice, was come to live in Ireland, and they'd be such pleasant companions for each other; but I suppose they can't meet now, as they are both in the same scrape."

The most eminent physician in Dublin was engaged to attend Nesta, for Morgan would not trust any of the neighbouring practitioners at such an important moment.

CHAPTER XIV.

Let me not experience sorrow in a life of apparent prosperity,
Nor obtain such wealth as would ever be stinging my mind.
EURIPIDES.

MORGAN spoke to Nesta several times about the Glenmaurices after he heard from Mrs. O'Malley that she knew they were at Maurice Castle. He told her that he was superintending some draining and planting near the Shievedhue mountains, not far from their place.

Nesta often looked through the telescope at that tower on the mountains with a sort of strange fascination, although she did not like to think that Honoria was there.

In the same range of vision, but far below and much nearer, she could discern part of her own place, Carrigroghan, and could look on the window of her bedroom there ; she could see the broad terrace-walk, and even the wood beyond, with the low wall, where

the mysterious figure, which had terrified her so much, had stood.

She turned away with a shudder, determined never to look at that part of the view again. One day, however, when she went to amuse herself by gazing on the distant prospect, she found that the telescope happened to be directed towards Carrigroghan, and the same kind of fascination she had often felt before, impelled her to look at it. The evening was unusually calm and clear, and the distant objects which she observed through the telescope had that peculiar near appearance that made her fancy she could hear the buzz of the insects and song of the birds that she saw flitting about the foliage of the beech-grove. Suddenly, a sound of laughter seemed to reach her ear—a low, mocking laugh, ending with a shriek; it echoed along the terrace-walk and through the wood beyond—was it fancy? And she saw the red cloak and hood of the same figure leaning on the low wall. Nesta hurried from the room—called for the nurse, and made her look through the telescope. No figure, however, could Nurse Sullivan discover. Nesta could not look again; for the sight of the figure

had made her so ill, that she was obliged to be carried to her bed. This was only the day before the doctor was expected. Nesta felt that he would scarcely arrive in time.

"Oh, never fear," said Mrs. O'Sullivan, "if he don't; sure I and Nurse Henessy will be better than all the doctors in the world; you may be quite easy in your mind."

Morgan, however, did not seem to be so easy in his mind, for he sent off an express to hasten the doctor's arrival. That night Nesta was very ill, Morgan sat up by her bedside, and Mrs. Henessy was in the next room. It was a sultry night in early autumn; Nesta felt she could scarcely breathe, and begged to have the window open. Morgan complied with her request; it was a bright moonlight night. She could discern from her bed the range of the Shievehue mountains in the distant horizon, and she could also see the tower over Maurice Castle, which had so often fascinated her gaze. Was it fancy, or did she really see a blue light suddenly appear on the summit of the tower? It remained for some minutes. She felt too ill to speak; but when after a little time she sank into a sort of dull doze and again woke, still that blue light was burning on

the high tower. Soon, however, she became too ill to think of, or see anything.

* * * * *

Hours afterwards, the first distinct words that reached Nesta's ears were: "Sure and it's the blessedest boy and the finest I ever laid eyes on."

She was too weak to speak, but endeavoured to make the nurse understand that she wished to see the child.

"Wait a bit; it's dressing the blessed infant they are, and you must go to sleep now; have a sup of this, and by the time you'll wake up all fresh, you shall see him."

A vague kind of anxiety made her wonder why she might not see her child at once. Had they tried to deceive her? Had the child been born dead? But the nurse looked so happy, that she tried to think it was all right, and she sank into a quiet sleep.

It was evening when she next woke, and to her infinite delight there was a lovely babe by her side. It was much larger, and apparently healthier, than her poor little girl, and it had the peculiar black resplendent eyes of the O'Neils.

"Yes, it has got its papa's own joyful look," said the nurse, "and the fire that

burns in the coal-black eye, and the lips that'll spake proud words, and the hand that'll slay its enemies; 'tis the very pattern of the O'Neils, God bless his little heart; and sure was not I right when I said he was a beauty?"

Morgan came into the room at that moment, and expressing his joy at seeing Nesta, took the child in his arms and kissed it. He had never done so with her little girl. He had never taken the poor fair baby in his arms, and for a moment a pang of jealousy for the lost little one embittered the joy she felt.

But reproaching herself for this ungrateful feeling, she thanked God fervently for the blessing, for the joy that a son was born. Her recovery was slow, and she was not able to participate in the noisy rejoicings that echoed through the country for miles round at the boy's christening. Bonfires blazed on the heights, there was such dancing and singing and feasting in all the villages and farm-houses which were scattered over their wide domains, that the oldest inhabitants had "never seen the like."

Old Mr. Q'Neil came from Kiloran to attend the christening, for Morgan had con-

trived to get ready, a complete apartment for him, and his delight on seeing the fine child, who he directly declared should inherit every sixpence he possessed, was unbounded. He kissed Nesta over and over again, and danced the baby in his arms, and with that sudden expansive demonstrativeness which shy persons sometimes show when they are strongly excited, he insisted on dancing a jig with the old nurse Henessy.

Nesta could not, of course, help being gratified at the old man's delight; but she longed to tell him how very unjust it seemed to her that a child who must necessarily inherit nearly the whole of her own fortune, should also have the large possessions Mr. O'Neil had in his power to bequeath. When she remembered that Henry and Eva's boy would have nothing, that his parents would probably scarcely be able to pay for his education, and this owing to her husband's deceit, she wept, and the conviction became impressed strongly on her mind that there would be no blessing on this babe.

"It is impossible he can ever prosper," she thought, as she looked at him in his cradle beside her, "if his father should continue to deceive Mr. O'Neil about poor

Henry. It is impossible;" and she prayed more fervently than ever that her husband's eyes might be opened to a sense of this injustice—to the baseness of continuing to conceal the truth. But she felt too ill and weak to encounter at present the angry looks which she knew Morgan would give her if she mentioned the subject. She resolved to wait patiently, and if after a time he remained deaf to her entreaty, she would herself go and inform Mr. O'Neil of the truth, and implore him to alter his will in favour of Henry's child.

CHAPTER XV.

Those who are childless cannot have experienced
Whether the birth of children brings most pleasure or trouble
To mortals, and therefore, if they miss the pleasure,
They are exempt from many anxious troubles.
And those who have children in their homes
Blooming sweetly, I behold worn with care
The whole time; first of all the anxiety is
How they are to educate them well, and from whence
They can procure wealth to leave behind them, or sufficient to
maintain their children,
And then, besides all these anxieties, whether they are toiling
For good or bad sons is quite uncertain.

EURIPIDES.

THE christening fêtes were over, and Morgan was about to attend the opening of Parliament. The doctors advised that his wife should not venture to undertake the journey until she became stronger; so she was to remain at Dermot Castle until the Easter recess. When Eva heard that Nesta was remaining alone in that secluded castle, she fancied that its solitude and gloomy grandeur would depress her spirits; but the letters she received in reply from her tended somewhat to diminish these fears.

Nesta wrote, "I am very happy here with my beautiful boy, and I do not mind the short days and long lonely evenings; my only dread is that I should again see that mysterious figure; you know I saw it the evening before my child was born on the very same spot as before—in the beech-grove at Carrigroghan. I saw it through the telescope from my window here. It was leaning on the low wall. I could distinguish plainly the red hood and tall figure amid the shade of the trees. I have never allowed myself to look through the glass in that direction since. It was the day before little Roland was born. I cannot help thinking of it every night when I go to bed; and I constantly wake with a start, and put out my hands, to feel whether the baby is all safe by my side. But I try to reason with myself, and reflect how secure the position of this castle is. The drawbridge is raised every night, and Stevens, who I know is trustworthy, is ordered to go round every part of the castle; and as there is no entrance except over the drawbridge, I ought to feel that it is impossible that the strange woman could effect an entrance—you know I fancy she must have contrived to climb

up to my window at Carrigroghan by that great buttress that looks like giant steps, and which leads up to the leads, and your father thinks it was just possible that a person either asleep or insane might contrive to scale it. He fancies that it must have been a mad woman ; but other people, and in fact almost every one, think the whole was a delusion, a creation of my disordered imagination, for nobody ever saw any person answering the description.

“It is on account of this strange fear that I shall be glad to return to London, and to have the delight of being with you, and showing you my little Roland. I know you will admire my boy ; he is so large, and strong, and vigorous, that it seems to me miraculous how I, who have such very weak health, and latterly low spirits, could have given birth to such a vigorous and splendid creature. Thank God for him. I suppose I shall never quite recover the shock of that dear little Eva’s mysterious murder, for I do not experience the same kind of intense delight when I look at this splendid boy, as the sight of her little fair face and soft blue eyes used to give me. Probably that must be egotism, probably because she was more

like me: the strangely bright O'Neils' eyes of my boy produce in me a vague kind of admiration, which is almost akin to terror. Or it may be that I feel this strong and already independent baby will never want me. I shall never be of the same importance to him, he will never cling to me for support as that frail girl would have done. I know you will excuse and forgive all this rambling outburst of ungrateful feelings, so I will not tear up the letter as I resolved to do when I read it over this morning, but send it with all its wild and incoherent ideas."

"That is all very natural," said Eva, as she read it to her husband.

"That is very possible, but I think there is something strange in Mrs. De Lacy's feelings and fears," said Henry, who did not feel quite so well satisfied with the general tone of Nesta's letter as his perhaps more hopeful wife. But he purposely avoided saying anything to diminish her pleasure in reading Nesta's letter.

The winter months wore away, and no particular event occurred to trouble Nesta's peace or awaken her fears, and Morgan came over during the Easter holidays to take her to London.

She entered a little more into society this year, but she was glad to find that Morgan did not insist upon his former intention that she should endeavour to become a leader of the fashionable world. But as her health was now much stronger, she thought that she ought to give some fêtes, their house being one of the best adapted for such purposes.

To these parties the still reigning beauty, Lady Glenmaurice, came, and complimented Nesta on their success. She no longer evinced that haughty defiant manner that she did the first year of her married life; on the contrary, she seemed anxious to please. It appeared as if she almost wished to become on intimate terms with Mrs. De Lacy.

Nesta's happiest hours were those she passed with Eva and their children in Kensington Gardens, and there they sometimes met Honoria's children.

Besides the two fine boys they had admired so much the year before, there was now a little fair girl—the child that had been born at their place in Ireland, about the same period when the long wished-for heir of the O'Neils came into existence. This little Letitia was a most winning child,

and her fair beauty proved a charming contrast to her dark-eyed and proudly independent brothers. Nesta regarded her with peculiar interest, because the somewhat shrinking expression of her shy blue eyes reminded her of her own murdered darling.

The little creature, too, seemed to take a great fancy to her, and could scarcely be separated whenever Nesta took her in her arms. So Nesta's enjoyment of Kensington Gardens was increased after this occurrence, for she succeeded in winning the favour of a high-cheek-boned Scotch nurse, who allowed the baby to remain with Nesta and her boy, when the others walked and played in the Gardens.

But one day towards the end of the season another nurse, whom they had not before seen, came with the children, and she did not seem to like the intimacy with Mrs. De Lacy, and said something about the danger there was lest children should catch any infectious disorders from each other. There was something in this woman's countenance that did not please Nesta or her friend, and they inquired of one of the nursemaids whether the Scotchwoman was ill, or gone away.

The girl said, "Oh no, ma'am, but this one, Mrs. O'Halloran, was the head nurse, only she had been absent for the last month, as she went to her friends in Ireland."

After this day, little Letitia did not return to the Gardens, and the ill-tempered looking head nurse did not allow the two boys more than a passing greeting with Mrs. De Lacy. Nesta felt so much disappointed at being deprived of the pleasure of fondling that lovely baby, that she said to Eva she would speak about it to Honoria the next time she met her.

But Eva, who had heard much more to Honoria's disadvantage than had ever reached Nesta's ears, begged her to say nothing on the subject, for she did not like the idea of their ever being really intimate, although she judged it prudent that they should be on apparently amicable terms.

CHAPTER XVI.

Various are the gifts dispensed by Jove in Olympus,
And many things unhop'd for are performed by the gods;
And those which we expected do not come to pass,
But those which we never thought of are brought to pass by God.
(In such a manner hath this affair ended.

EURIPIDES.

THE season was drawing to a close, and Morgan consulted his wife about their plans for the summer and autumn. He said that she should do exactly as she liked best, either to pass the summer and autumn at Knutsford Hall, or at either of the two places in Ireland, which were now both ready for their reception.

For herself alone, Nesta felt that she would prefer going to her Yorkshire house, because there was no painful association connected with it such as haunted Carrig-roghan, and even, though in a less degree, Dermot Castle. On the other hand, as she lived so much in her affections, that her

chief happiness consisted in being near those she loved best, the Irish place attracted her most, because Eva was going to pass two months with her parents at Carrigroghan Rectory, and Aunt Mary intended to go over and pass some months at Dingleford Castle. Nesta had not seen Aunt Mary since the birth of her first child, and the recollection of the time that they had passed together at Knutsford Hall—those pleasant months when Aunt Mary had succeeded in awakening a renewed feeling of happiness in her wounded and disappointed heart, often recurred with a feeling of renovated strength to her mind. She fancied also that Morgan wished to go to Ireland himself, for he had improvements to superintend, but she was not quite certain that he wished that she should go.

However, he expressed satisfaction at her choice, and they proceeded on their journey by Holyhead.

On reaching Dublin, they heard that Mr. Roland O'Neil of Kiloran was very ill, and the doctor had been sent for to attend him.

Morgan started off in great haste the moment he heard of it, and he would not

listen to Nesta's entreaty that she might be allowed to accompany him.

"It will kill you to travel as fast as I shall go," he said, in a decided tone.

Nesta had never been able to persuade him to clear his brother's character from the scandalous accusation which had been brought against him, although she had made several attempts, and now she reproached herself for not having insisted more strongly on the importance of it. She determined, however, to follow Morgan, and travel as fast as she possibly could. There was no railroad in those days, so she was obliged to sleep one night on the way, at an inn; but she proceeded on her journey at sunrise the next morning.

On arriving at Kiloran she found Mr. O'Neil was much better; he was considered to be quite out of danger; but Morgan was evidently much annoyed at her arrival: he said it would agitate Mr. O'Neil to see her, and that she must, therefore, go at once to Dermot Castle. In vain she implored to be allowed to see him, and endeavoured to urge the injustice of not declaring the truth about Henry. But he would not listen to a word she said, and his only

answer was to force her back into the carriage, and tell the postilion to drive off. He followed the carriage on horseback, and his looks were so menacing that she felt, as they crossed the drawbridge and entered the castle, as if she were entering a prison. She expressed a wish to drive out the next day, but she was informed that the horses were all lame. A stupid groom, Morgan said, had managed them badly on the passage across, and he was afraid, he added, she would not be able to drive out at all till he could procure some other horses. She inquired whether it would not be possible to procure post-horses from Carrigtown, but Morgan said that the innkeeper had none, that he had given up keeping them. So there was no conveyance to be had, and Nesta suspected that he was determined she should not have the means of travelling to Kiloran. She must, therefore, wait patiently till Aunt Mary arrived at Dingleford Castle, and then she hoped that some plan might be found of reaching Mr. O'Neil's place. To her dismay, however, she found that Morgan watched her very narrowly, and even read the letters she wrote as well as those she received.

Eva had not yet arrived, but Mr. Dromore came to call on her, and she was in hopes that she might be able to tell him of her wishes; but Morgan remained in the room during the visit, and she had no opportunity of speaking to him on the subject which was uppermost in her mind.

Nesta never read any of the letters which came to her husband; he never showed them to her, but as they were brought in at the same time with hers, she sometimes recognised the handwriting of his various friends and acquaintances. One morning she fancied that she caught a sight of Honoria's writing on an envelope.

It might be fancy, but the letter which resembled hers seemed to produce some disagreeable effect on his mind. He rose up quickly, ordered his horse, and said that pressing business would take him out for the whole day, perhaps he might not return till the next morning. Soon after she heard the sound of horse's hoofs in the courtyard, and then through the archway, and, on going to the window, she saw him ride off at full gallop on the road towards Carrigroghan. She remarked that the horse was hers, and did not appear to be at all lame. This con-

vinced her that she was purposely prevented from going anywhere, lest she could contrive to gratify her wish of seeing Mr. O'Neil, and it had the effect of making her still more determined to succeed in reaching his house.

She was revolving in her mind how to send over the mountain to ascertain whether Aunt Mary had arrived, when she saw a figure in the distance coming down the mountain-path. She hoped that it might prove to be Aunt Mary on her little pony. It did so. A boy was walking beside it. Nesta watched with eager anxiety, and when they came to a steep place Aunt Mary dismounted, and proceeded on foot the short way up to the castle, while the boy led the pony round by a more circuitous path. Aunt Mary was a good climber, and she soon reached the stone stairs cut in the rock. Nesta ran out to meet her, and hastily explained the reason which induced her to resolve immediately to visit Mr. Roland O'Neil while Morgan should be absent. Aunt Mary was all anxiety to facilitate her projects, and advised that while Nesta was putting on her riding-dress and hat, the boy should be

sent on the pony to Carrigroghan to get horses, or even a fresh pony and guide, to take her over the mountain.

"There is a short way, I hear," said Nesta, "if one could but find it. I know that Morgan once went that way, but it is a very bad road. Could I not go on your pony?"

"That would be, I fear, impossible, for there is no guide at hand; but write to Mr. Dromore, and beg him to get you a trusty guide, and to come himself also, and bring a carriage and horses for us, because I will go also."

In less than an hour the boy returned with a horse and guide for her, and also Mr. Dromore with a carriage and horses. Nesta determined to go over the mountains, as it might enable her to reach Kiloran with greater speed; but the others went by the carriage-road. She fancied that the gatekeeper looked suspiciously at her as she passed out from under the dark archway on the strange horse, and the idea that she was watched, that perhaps the man had been ordered to inform his master if she attempted to leave the castle, took possession of her mind. Still Morgan could scarcely have

time to overtake her if he were gone any distance, and she felt somewhat reassured when Mr. Dromore told her that he had been seen riding very fast towards the Shievedhue mountains, which were quite in the opposite direction from where she was going. The shortest way across to Kiloran was up the glen, but Nesta feared that she would be observed from the castle, and therefore thought it better to proceed by the usual road until quite out of sight of it, and then turn up into the mountain-path. The road was so steep and slippery that Nesta was obliged to dismount several times and walk for a considerable distance. Had she been less absorbed in her anxiety to reach the end of her journey, she would have felt that it was the kind of path which would have awakened her fears. She had never been strong enough to be a good climber, and it always made her giddy to look down from any height. It seemed as if she would never reach the summit of the mountain-pass, and when at last she attained it and looked down, she was dismayed at the distance they would have still to travel, and at the abruptness of the descent. They were now on the eastern

side of the mountain, and the lengthening shadows, as they came to a gloomy bog, drove her to despair.

"Are you sure you know the shortest way?" she inquired, when the guide turned towards the setting sun again.

"Ah, never fear, I know every turn and twist o' the road, and sure it's the bog that's convenient for losing man and horse; and warn't Denis Moriarty drowned entirely, and his horse too, in this very bog of Kelikeely; and if I didn't take yer honour backwards and forwards, like the winding stairs in Kiloran Tower, it's drowned we'd be all three of us, and no one a bit the wiser nor better for it till the end o' the world."

This was not a pleasant prospect, and as the bog began to extend on both sides, and they had to traverse it by a narrow path only just wide enough for the man to walk by the side of the horse, Nesta thought the flat causeway she had now to pass was worse than the steep mountain-path. Again they turned sharp round. The guide showed her triumphantly where Pat Connell and Teddy Maloney had fallen in and were unable to get out; and that their hats and shillelaghs were found long afterwards. "Maybe it was

drunk they were, for I can't think that they had not know'd their way."

The sun was setting when they came in sight of Kiloran; its red gleam shone on the windows of the broad pile of building, and soon afterwards she had the delight of finding herself in the avenue that led up to the house. But she remembered that now a more painful and difficult task than the journey over the mountain-pass still awaited her. To convince Mr. Roland that her own husband was guilty of a base and unjust act—to open the eyes of a trustful and confiding old man who had learned to look on Morgan with admiring affection—was the painful task that lay before her to be accomplished that night.

She was so tired, too, that she could scarcely stand when she dismounted, and requested to see Mr. O'Neil. But she remembered she must not allow her courage to flag for an instant, otherwise the battle would be lost; and by a strong nervous effort she forced herself to go through with what yet remained to be done.

CHAPTER XVII.

No one is exempted
Except the gods from old age. Nor ever from death,
But everything else succumbs to all-powerful Time.
The vigour of the earth decays and the human body perishes,
And belief dies and unbelief blossoms forth.
The same spirit is never stationary among mankind
Either towards their friends, nor in one state towards another.
For to some indeed already, and to others after a time,
Pleasant things become bitter, and then again sweet.

SOPHOCLES.

MR. O'NEIL had had an apoplectic fit, and although he was so far recovered as to have regained his speech and powers of mind, yet he had become quite infirm, and was carried up and down stairs from his bedroom to the library. He was sitting in a deep bay-window that commanded an extensive view over the fine woods of Kiloran, which sloped down to the sea-shore at some two or three miles distant. On one side the blue mountains which separated the Bay of Kiloran from Dingleford were visible, and behind their range the sun was now just

sinking, and the old man was able to admire the sight of the rich colouring—of the gold and crimson tinge on the woods and sparkling sea.

No visitor, except his relation Morgan, ever came up to the castle now, therefore it was with extreme surprise that he saw a lady on horseback ride up to the door. The next minute, a servant announced Mrs. O'Neil De Lacy.

"Ah me, dear child, is that yer very own self? What brings you here—the boy is not ill?"

"No, oh no; but the moments are so precious, and I came here to inform you of something of the greatest importance;" and breathlessly she threw herself on her knees before the old man. "Will you believe me—will you listen to me without interruption?"

Her vehemence startled him; but Nesta, perceiving that his attention was really roused, related more impressively and in fewer words than she fancied she had the power to do, all that had occurred. She endeavoured to explain how painfully she felt the injustice—the poverty which had been entailed on Henry O'Neil by the loss

of the living Lord Mowbray would have given him if the bishop had made no objection to his ordination.

Poor Mr. O'Neil lifted his hands in a gesture of helpless dismay, and looked into her eyes as if wondering whether she were in her right mind. Nesta endeavoured to be more composed, and to speak with less eagerness—to say everything which could induce him to give credit to what seemed so improbable—as she felt sure he considered the whole story. Then she appealed to his kind affection for herself, and explained that unless she were convinced of the cruelty that had been inflicted on Henry O'Neil, it could never be her wish to deprive her own child of his expected inheritance. This idea at last seemed to weigh with Mr. O'Neil.

“ Bless your pretty face, and sure I can't but believe ye. Then, what do you want me to do ? ”

“ Make another will, and leave your property to Henry or his child, a beautiful boy, quite as like the O'Neils as mine is, and if possible, more healthy.”

He scratched his head with a helpless look, and said,

“ But now, do ye really want me to be-

lieve that your husband has not only ruined that poor girl, but endeavoured to throw the blame of it on his own brother?"

Nesta endeavoured to make the best case for Morgan that she could, by saying he had been induced to do so for love of herself; that he knew she would have refused to marry him if he had confessed that he had behaved in such a cruel manner towards the poor girl. She knew this was the cause, she said, although he had never acknowledged it to her.

"And I have ridden and walked across the mountains and bogs on a hired pony, in order to ensure an interview with you, for Morgan has not allowed me the use of a horse since I came to Ireland, lest I should endeavour to see you."

"You rode across the mountains and through the black bog of Carrigmacross all to tell me your own child should be disinherited? And how could you get safe here? I was as good a rider as ever put foot in stirrup, yet I'd look twice before I'd cross that bog. My poor child, and you must be starved and dead tired, and you too—frail and delicate as a lily—you are. Sit down now directly, and have something to eat and

drink ;" and he put out his hand to pull the bell, but Nesta kept back his hand, and said,

"I will not touch any food, I will not stir from here, till you have promised to do justice ; till you assure me that when the servant answers that bell, your first order will be to send for a lawyer and alter your will ; not till you have promised me this shall any food pass my lips, so help me God !"

Mr. O'Neil was really touched, and conceding to her wishes, he made the promise required, and then she allowed him to ring the bell.

"Bring some supper, will ye, and be quick !" he said, to the servant who entered.

"Then remember your promise."

"Well, send for Mr. Nolan, and tell him to come up to me now as quick as he can."

"Tell him to ride for his life, and I'll give you five pounds if he's here before an hour has passed from this time," she added, with a sort of commanding gesture and manner of speaking which was quite unlike her usual self. Then, before she consented to take the food provided for her, she induced him to promise that he would not tell Morgan ; she feared the consequences for her child as well as herself from his anger,

as she had sometimes witnessed the most fearful outbreaks of temper when by chance any of his purposes were thwarted. The old man's affection and sympathy for her was now thoroughly aroused, and he readily gave her the promise she required.

At that moment they heard the sound of carriage-wheels in the avenue, and Nesta saw that Aunt Mary and Mr. Dromore were driving up to the door.

She had just time to explain who they were and why they came, before the servant entered the room to inquire of Mr. O'Neil whether he would like to see them.

"Oh yes, if they are friends of yours, show them in by all means," said he, as he took Nesta's hands and pressed them to his lips. "For surely if ever there was an angel on the face of this wicked world it is your own dear self, and I'd like to die, I would, while your dear kind eyes are looking upon me, for I never felt anything do me so much good, or make me feel so happy, as those eyes, the real bits of heavenly blue that shine out of them on a sinful mortal like me. And a different man I should have been, and done more good in the world, if I could have known ye in my youth. But

ye were not born then, nor till long afterwards, more's the pity ; so here I am a lone old man, and no one will care whether I live or die."

"Here is Aunt Mary," said Nesta, who feared that he would tire himself if he continued to give way to the excitement of expressing all he felt for her. "Here is Aunt Mary, and she will be delighted to know that you have so kindly consented to repair some of the injustice which has been done ; and this is Eva's father, but he cares so little about this world's goods, even for his daughter, that except to please me, he would not have uttered a word about the injustice from which his son-in-law has suffered."

The messenger who had been despatched for Mr. Nolan returned within the time Nesta had so urgently requested, accompanied by the lawyer ; and, with breathless anxiety lest anything should occur to interrupt the process, she saw the new will drawn out. It was Mr. Nolan who had made the other : he seemed readily to understand the case, and made the required alteration without delay or difficulty. In a short time the document was ready for sig-

nature, and Mr. Nolan promised to keep the secret of the alteration of Mr. O'Neil's will with the most scrupulous care.

There was something in his countenance which induced Nesta to believe him, but she did not feel so well satisfied with one of the servants who was brought into the room to witness the signature—an old butler, who had lived for the last fifty years in the family, and of whom Mr. O'Neil had the highest opinion ; but there was an expression on the man's countenance which Nesta did not like, although she could not quite define the reason of her misgivings. However, it was such a relief to her when she saw the will safely signed and witnessed, that for a moment she forgot the risk there was lest Morgan should discover its existence, and contrive in some way to render it useless. She was recalled to a sense of the danger by hearing Mr. O'Neil consulting with Aunt Mary as to what would be the most secure place to deposit it in ; and he suggested Mr. Ryan's office at Carrigtown.

Not a moment must be lost, for it was most important that they should return immediately, and that their absence should create as little notice as possible.

"You had better not leave it here," said Nesta, "for if it be lost, all our efforts will prove useless."

"No," said Mr. O'Neil, "take it away with you, my dear lady, and may God bless you, my darlin' child, and may He prosper you and yours for ever and ever."

Nesta nearly fainted as soon as they were safely in the carriage, for she was utterly prostrate with fatigue and anxiety; but Aunt Mary was fortunately provided with restoratives. Nesta's first words on recovering disclosed another anxiety. "Oh, but Morgan will suspect—he will question Mr. O'Neil—the good old man will never be able to conceal it."

"Well then, you will have done your best," said Mr. Dromore; "and after all, if it be God's will that my little grandson should be as poor as his father and grandfather, what harm will it do him? So cheer up, my dear lady."

Mr. Dromore and Aunt Mary had contrived so well, that two relays of post horses were ready for them, so that they reached the dark glen, and drove up to Dermot Castle soon after twelve o'clock that night. As they drove over the drawbridge, and

entered the echoing court-yard, Nesta's greatest terror was now lest Morgan should have returned, and wondered at her strange absence.

"Remember, it was all my doing," said Aunt Mary; "I had a fancy to go and see Kiloran, and so I took you with me."

It was an inexpressible relief, therefore, when on arriving at the entrance door, they heard that Mr. O'Neil had not returned home.

Nesta hastily alighted, and the carriage drove off again with Mr. Dromore and Aunt Mary.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Hapless woman! why does this heavy wrath
Of mind fall upon thee—and dark hostile
Slaughter take the place of natural feeling?
For among mortals the pollutions of kindred
Are hard to atone for; and the same kind of evil
Falls from the gods on the houses of murderous.

EURIPIDES.

MORGAN O'NEIL did not return home until a late hour the following day; Nesta was much relieved to find that he made no inquiries about her occupation during his absence, and as she did not perceive anything unusual in his manner towards her, she began to hope that he would never hear of her expedition to Kiloran.

He gave her some details of the improvements which were in progress, and of some marble quarries that he discovered lately at the eastern extremity of the property, in the Shievedhue mountains. Pointing out through the telescope the spot where the miners were at work, he said: "I went

there yesterday, to see how the works were getting on, and remained there so late that I accepted an invitation to dine and sleep at Maurice Castle. . . They returned on Tuesday—you know the excavations are close to the boundary—about a mile and a half from the castle, across the mountain. I find that Lady Glenmaurice is going to spend a few days with her father at Dingleford, so she will probably come here to see you. By-the-by, Aunt Mary has arrived at the Verdens' also."

"Yes, she was here yesterday," said Nesta, looking down intently on her painting, with the painful consciousness that she was betraying the agitating terror which made her tremble so provokingly.

He took no notice of it, even if he saw the heightened colour which she felt mounted up to the roots of her hair.

He added, after a pause: "You know we can lodge Aunt Mary if she would like to come now—she might have an apartment in the Eagle's Tower. The upper rooms there will be quite after her own heart, I should think."

"Oh, how delightful that would be," answered Nesta, looking up to him with eyes

that expressed all the gratitude she really felt.

"Then we will go over the bay to-morrow, and persuade her to come back with us, and now you can amuse yourself by seeing that the rooms are comfortable, and take up some of her favourite books, and place them on the shelves that you'll find there."

Nesta had not been in the Eagle's Tower since it was finished, and her delight was great as they mounted the little staircase which wound up a projecting turret to the three large rooms that were built one above the other. The tower had been raised to a great height, it overlooked all the rest of the castle, and its battlements commanded a view over part of the glen in a different direction from the Shievedhue mountains.

"Ah, how enchanted Aunt Mary will be with this!" she said; and yet there was mingled with her delight a feeling of self-reproach at being obliged to deceive the husband who had shown such a wish to gratify her tastes.

It was habitually most painful to her never to be able to speak her real thoughts; never to be able to place full confidence in

him; never to trust fully the husband who often appeared to do what seemed to him most conducive to her happiness.

The next day he accompanied her to Dingleford Castle, and while he remained in the drawing-room to talk to Mrs. Verdon, Nesta ran up to Aunt Mary, and told her of Morgan's kind wish that she should come and pass some time with them at Dermot Castle. Aunt Mary also expressed the pleasure she felt at this idea, but she said it would be impossible, for many reasons, that she should accept the proposal at present. But to pass some time, perched up at the top of the lofty Eagle's Tower, was exactly what she would like above all things, and she told Morgan, when they went down, that she thought he must have built it on purpose for her.

In the agitation and hurry of the expedition to Kiloran, Aunt Mary had not, of course, seen the baby boy. When Nesta remembered this, she began to tremble lest Morgan should speak to her about the child, but he fortunately said nothing on the subject, nor did anything occur to call forth any disagreeable apprehensions, so that at some moments Nesta was almost afraid he

had some design in avoiding the subject of Kiloran.

Several weeks passed without any occurrence which could lead her to imagine that Morgan had any suspicion of her visit to Mr. O'Neil. He never even mentioned his name, and Nesta of course made no inquiry, but she heard one day, about a month after her visit, that the poor man had had another apoplectic fit.

Mr. Dromore heard of it from the attorney, Mr. Ryan, into whose hands he had consigned the important will. They supposed he must have been seized not long after he made it; but as there was so little communication with that part of the country, the news had not reached Carrigtown before. Morgan had been away several times, and might possibly have visited Kiloran; but Nesta imagined that as he was much interested in the progress of the marble works, he probably slept at Lord Glenmaurice's during these excursions, and that was quite in an opposite direction from Kiloran.

The report proved to be true. Mr. O'Neil had been seized with illness the day after Nesta's visit, had quite lost the use of his speech, and was for some time unconscious

of anything which passed around him. Whether it was brought on by the agitating and painful discovery that the only person he seemed to have loved and trusted was guilty of such base deceit, could never be known; but so it happened, that the fervent "God bless you, my dear child, and may He prosper you and yours for ever and ever," were the last distinct words he spoke.

Nesta did not learn these, and other details connected with his illness, until long afterwards; but one day, soon after Mr. Ryan heard of his seizure, Morgan informed her that he had just received intelligence of Mr. O'Neil's death.

He said he must go immediately to Kiloran to make the necessary arrangements, as he was Mr. O'Neil's nearest relation.

Nesta did not perceive any indication of anxiety or distrust on her husband's countenance—but she could scarcely conceal the agitation she herself experienced at the news.

"I may probably be detained a week or more," he said, without noticing her trembling embarrassment, "for I shall of course be obliged to remain and attend the funeral; and perhaps pension off some of the old

servants, and arrange matters of that kind." He then kissed her with the same appearance of kindness which he had of late manifested, and mounted his horse.

She watched his receding form, as he rode through the glen, with a feeling of dread, lest the next time they met she should have to encounter the dark angry glance which used to alarm her so much. The secret must be discovered now—she longed to see Aunt Mary, and consult her and Mr. Dromore as to the best means of explaining the affair, or of warding off the dire effects of her husband's anger at his bitter disappointment. And when she remembered the kind looks and words he had lately bestowed on her, she could scarcely refrain from weeping, as she thought that she might never hear the soft tones of his loved voice speaking those words of admiring affection which of late had often made her intensely happy.

It was too late in the day to allow of her going to Dingleford; but she decided to write and ask Mr. Dromore to come and see her as soon as possible. After the messenger went, she was far too much agitated to sit down and pursue any of her usual occupations; she walked to and fro on the narrow terrace garden overlooking the river.

The sun had set; the dark rocks seemed to her terrified imagination to frown upon her in anger, and the torrent far below appeared to foam and rage with a fierce turbulence that made her shudder as she looked down upon it over the parapet wall. The wind blew in fitful gusts, and howled among the battlements, and through the crevices of the ancient building; and as the chilling blast swept over her face, a feeling of horror reminded her of the night at Car-rigroghan when her child died. Again she saw, in her mind's eye, the shadowy figure passing slowly across the faint starlight—the blue marks of two fingers on the baby's throat—all that dreadful scene recurred more vividly to her mind than it had done for a long time. It was as if she had the same kind of perception of a horrible presence. Could it be fancy? It was nearly dark, yet Nesta thought she saw just opposite, on the other side of the torrent, the tall figure with the red hood. It stood quite still, and the same loud mocking laugh which she had heard the first time it appeared to her under the beech-grove at Car-rigroghan, now sounded in her ears, more harsh and discordant even than before, for it was only about twenty yards distant—

only the deep chasm with the rushing torrent beneath, separated them.

Nesta longed to fly, but she was so petrified with horror that she felt rooted to the spot. Then the wild shrieking laugh seemed close to her ear, and the words were hissed into it: "Ha! I've got it safe—and I've got yer baby daughter, and I've got yer still-born child. For yer golden guineas stole away from me the base O'Neil's heart, and I'll have my revenge on ye all. Ha! ha! ye thought to outwit me, did ye? But I'll walk on the clouds, and I'll walk on the rocks, and under the waters, and over the house-tops, and ye may go far and wide, and rise up to the heights of heaven, and go down to the depths of hell, afore ye'll lay hands on Nelly O'More."

A loud shriek, the same kind of triumphant laugh—then a low plaintive song was heard, and the figure seemed to ascend the steep mountain-side. And from the top of the mountain-path, Nesta thought she heard the words, "I'll come again;" and then, fainter and fainter in the distance, an echo repeated, "I'll come again."

Nesta returned to the well-lighted library which opened on the terrace, and ran up to

her boy's room. It was situated on another side of the quadrangle, at some distance, and the long passages and galleries leading to it were not yet lighted up, so she could not go very fast; and as she remembered with a shudder that the figure had uttered some threat against this boy, it seemed as if she would never reach the room.

Nesta found it, however, safely reposing in its little cot; yet she felt sure something dreadful would occur, because the feeling of horror connected with that mysterious woman had before preheralded misfortune, and she anxiously awaited Mr. Dromore's arrival. But he sent a message to say that he could not come till the next morning, and Nesta passed a sleepless night, during which the strange woman's words were constantly recurring to her mind—"over the house-tops, and under the waters"—coupled with a shuddering recollection of the Mermaid's Cave, and of the narrow chasm over which Morgan had jumped when she first saw him on that very mountain. She also remembered that there was a tradition about some passage under the river, for she had heard many strange stories about it.

CHAPTER XIX.

A woman who is quick in temper, and indeed a man
Who is so likewise, is easier to guard against than one who is
silently crafty.

EURIPIDES.

NESTA resolved to take her child with her to visit Aunt Mary the next morning, and just as she was going to start for Dingleford Mr. Dromore arrived.

He appeared to be much distressed and annoyed, even before she told him of the strange appearance which had terrified her the night before. Indeed, he seemed scarcely able to comprehend or listen to her fears, but immediately began to tell her of a perplexing and annoying discovery which had been made.

"I was obliged to go last evening to Mr. Ryan's house on business," he said, "and found him in a state of the greatest perplexity about Mr. Roland O'Neil's will.

Mr. Ryan, who is, for an Irishman, rather careful than otherwise, kept the will, with other important deeds, in a small room up two pair of stairs, the door of which is always kept double locked, and no one permitted to enter. He always carries the key about his person, and as soon as he was informed of the death of Mr. Roland O'Neil, he proceeded up-stairs to get the will. When he unlocked the door and entered the room, he found that some one had been meddling with his papers. The documents were, in fact, strewed about the room in the utmost confusion. They all appeared as if some one had been searching among them, and had thrown them hastily aside as fast as they were looked at. 'Who could have been here, and how could any one have entered?' was the anxious inquiry we both made. Mr. Ryan soon perceived that the window, which was always kept closed, was partly open. He looked in the shelf, or rather particular kind of pigeon-hole, where Mr. O'Neil's will was kept, but the shelf was quite empty. Then we both looked over all the remaining papers, and continued our anxious search during the entire evening and night, but no traces of it could

be found ; yet, as far as Mr. Ryan could recollect, nothing else was missing. We questioned the servants, but they both said that no one had entered the house since Mr. Ryan had left it that afternoon ; and it seemed impossible that any other entrance could have been effected without the servants' knowledge. An old woman who lived in the cottage near said that she saw a banshee in the early part of the evening in Mr. Ryan's garden at the back of his house—a tall figure, with a red hood ; that it disappeared among the trees which grew on the steep side of the mountain at the back of the house. But that was, probably, only some foolish fancy—the poor people are always seeing banshees, or fairies, or something superstitious."

"And that window which you said was found open, looks into the garden?" inquired Nesta.

"Yes, it does ; but the room is on the third floor, so that surely it would be impossible for any one to enter by the window unless by a ladder, and the garden is separated from those of the adjoining houses by a high wall, over which the ladder must have been taken."

"But, on the mountain-side, there was no wall, and you say that the figure with the red hood disappeared under the trees in that direction?" said Nesta, as she remembered that she heard the figure say, "Ha, ha, I've got it safe!" And then she related to Mr. Dromore the story of the apparition she had seen, and maintained that it was just possible the figure might have had something to do with the robbery.

He was startled by her account, but replied, "How could it be possible for her to have entered the room without a ladder? And how could she have known where the will was kept? Besides, you said Morgan seemed quite unconscious even of its existence?"

"So he appeared; but he is unfathomable, and often surprises me by doing or saying exactly what I expect least. That old butler, who witnessed the signature to the will, whose face I did not like, he may have overheard you say you would give it to Mr. Ryan. You did tell me so before we left Kiloran."

The police had been informed of this robbery of important papers, and Mr. Ryan

was using every means to ascertain how and by whom this theft had been committed, and to recover the document, if possible.

So nothing more could be done at present.

Nesta resolved to proceed now, as she had intended, with the child to Dingleford Castle, and asked Mr. Dromore to accompany her there. She was very anxious to tell Aunt Mary all that had occurred, and ask her advice, and, if possible, persuade her to return with them. So they drove up to the point, and took a boat there to cross the bay.

Lord and Lady Glenmaurice had arrived at Dingleford the previous evening, and when Nesta and Mr. Dromore were shown into the drawing-room, they found Honoria sitting with her mother and Alice. Honoria appeared very glad to see Nesta, and asked, with an air of great interest, many questions about her boy.

"I did not bring any of my children here; their noise would drive mamma distracted, they are so riotous and naughty; but I am going to take her home with me, and then she may go and visit them in the distant wing where they are kept. It would

have been impossible to keep them in order in this house. But I am afraid that something has occurred to distress you, you look so pale and agitated."

"Yes, I am much distressed," said Nesta. "Poor Mr. Roland O'Neil is dead, and Morgan is gone to Kiloran. He was a very dear old man," she added, for she really loved him, and naturally wished that the agitation and anxiety she could not quite conceal should not be imputed to any other cause.

"You had better not talk of it," said Mr. Dromore. "I will explain all about his sudden and melancholy end. You go up to Aunt Mary's Tower and rest."

Honorina expressed in civil words her sympathy with the loss they had sustained; only the half-suppressed smile of contempt that lurked in the corners of her proud lips, and glistened in her radiant eyes, showed that she did not deem the inheritors of the estates of Kiloran worthy of much compassion.

But Nesta was so occupied with anxiety that she did not perceive it as she left the room and hastened up to Aunt Mary's Tower.

In the long gallery which led only towards it, and connected it with the rest of the castle, she met a pale and interesting-looking woman, who spoke in broken English, and asked Nesta if she were in want of a servant. She added, that she was going to leave Lady Glenmaurice. Nesta had often heard Aunt Mary mention Florentine, so that she was predisposed in her favour, and inquired why she wished to leave her mistress. Florentine burst into tears, and said:

"I am sorry to feel I must leave her; but I see Madame is preoccupied at this present time—she is unhappy and full of care, so I will not incommode her and keep her away from that good lady up in the Tower. I knew Madame came this way, and Madame Bridgeman will give all relations if—if Madame have time to ask, and will like to have me in her service. I want so to dwell with a *good* lady," she added, again bursting into tears; "and do not think me ungrateful because I wish to leave miladi."

"I will speak to Miss Bridgeman," said Nesta, "and shall probably like to take you very much, but I am anxious to see her as soon as possible," added Nesta, who did not

like to leave the poor woman hastily, and yet was so preoccupied and shaken by all she had undergone that she could scarcely comprehend or attend to poor Mademoiselle Florentine's speech.

When Aunt Mary heard Nesta's account of the strange apparition of the previous night, she immediately said that she would return with her to Dermot Castle, and added, that she always intended to come there whenever she found there was likely to be any questions asked, or remarks made, about the will. "If, however, it cannot be found," continued Aunt Mary, "it would be useless to betray any knowledge of its existence."

"And then Morgan and my poor baby will actually inherit the immense additional property of thirty thousand a year. I feel that it will—it must bring misfortune on the poor child."

"I see no help for it," said Aunt Mary. "Henry will of course lose the inheritance; the only chance is, if your boy can be really well educated, and prove worthy of his immense riches, that he should one day make restitution, or give some portion of it back to poor Henry's child."

"That is the only hope, I suppose, if this Will be really lost." But her heart sank as she remembered the kind of education most men receive; above all, the different temptations to which heirs of such wealth are liable.

"I intended to have come to Castle Dermot to-morrow," said Aunt Mary, after a long pause, during which they both had been gazing out upon the beautiful view with eyes that seemed rather looking to some far-distant and anxious futurity, than on the real scene before them. "I intended to come there—for the sight, the presence of Honoria is most painful to me. I cannot quite comprehend now what she is driving at—sometimes one sees in her a momentary expression of real feeling and penitence, or regret, then again she is hard, insensible, and defiant. But I see plainly I can be of no use to her, and it is only a painful loss of time to me."

"And this maid of hers, Florentine?" inquired Nesta, who suddenly remembered the interesting person who had spoke to her in the gallery.

"Ah, take her by all means; she is a good, tender-hearted creature, and you'll find her a great comfort. She is shocked at

Honoria's conduct, and she does not think it right to remain with her, but of course she will not say so to any one but myself. She has had great patience, and borne with Honoria's bad temper in a way that she could not have done, had she not loved her mistress. But I remember her telling me long ago that it was a real grief to her when Honoria behaved so ill to Morgan."

"Honoria must be a very fascinating person," said Nesta, after another of those pauses, during which their eyes were directed to the far-distant mountains. "I wonder whether he will always love her? I sometimes think, for a few fleeting moments, that he cares for me more than he once did—more, at least, than when we married, and yet I suppose her influence over him is the same."

"I doubt whether she ever had any real influence over him," said Aunt Mary. "It may seem strange when I tell you, but my impression is, that she is not good enough; I mean that, as her standard of right and wrong becomes lower (which it certainly does more and more), her real influence over Morgan will be loosened."

"And yet you have a bad opinion of him—you think Morgan very wrong?"

"I do, certainly, but I fancy that, with all his faults, he is keenly susceptible to beauty. I mean the purest embodiments of beauty expressed by the Greek word *καλός*, by which, in the simplicity of their hearts, these poor benighted heathens used also to express what we call goodness, so that I imagine he will never be permanently influenced except by what is *good*. I always told Honoria this when she first discovered that she loved him. And now I imagine that her chief hold over him is produced by many other causes. Ambition is his strongest passion, and in various ways she can assist him. You know she has become quite a political character. She attends the debates, and piques herself on having several of the ministers, and other leading men of the day, under the influence of her charms."

"Then do you think it possible he may ever care for me really?"

"I think it is very likely, because you are becoming more and more worthy to inspire a true and lasting affection. You are working in the right direction."

"But when he discovers how deceitfully I have behaved about this Will?"

"He will be furious, and I fear you will

have a tremendous scene—a sad outburst of wild anger to endure, that is, unless he may have some motive in concealing from you his feelings about it. Yet, at the same time, I hope he has still some capacity to comprehend what is noble and good, and that in the midst of his anger and disappointment, he will be able almost to respect you for having induced Mr. Roland O'Neil to do this act of justice.”

“ Ah, I am afraid that is impossible, because you must remember that he always dislikes poor Henry, and yet he must see how noble, how good he is.”

“ There are other causes for his dislike in that case; he has always been jealous of his brother—a jealousy almost unconsciously acquired from early childhood. Did you never hear of the old man's prophecy, or saying, at Henry's birth, ‘that the son of the younger should be lord over the son of the elder child!’ and that this being afterwards incautiously repeated in Morgan's hearing, it laid the foundation of that Cain-like spirit of ill will towards his brother, which has grown up with him since? And perhaps the consciousness of his own injustice towards Henry was constantly adding

fuel to the fire of his hatred. In his feelings towards you, there is nothing of this kind of jealousy. He has never injured you so deeply as he has his brother—therefore you can never inspire the same kind of hatred which completely blinds his perception of all that is good in poor Henry—rather happy Henry, I should say, for I am certain that he has more enjoyment—more positive happiness even in this world—even in his dark little home in that foggy city, than Morgan ever has in the most splendid of his numerous palaces.”

“That is quite true; but then he has Eva, and Morgan never had, never can have, any one to love like Eva—any one who is worthy to inspire the highest degree of affection as Eva must.”

“You may become like her.”

“Oh, Aunt Mary, look at my poor little pale face. How colourless—and insipid—just consider the contrast to her perfect loveliness.”

“That is true; but it is not her outward loveliness which now causes Henry’s permanent happiness—you know that better than I can tell you.”

“Then I know I was wrong—wilfully

blind in wishing that Morgan should love me, wrong in consenting to marry him, and, therefore, I doubt whether God will grant my prayer, whether I can now ever be permitted to become quite worthy of exciting his best affections."

"Yes, because we are told that sins can be forgiven if we repent, and endeavour to live according to God's law. Therefore, dearest Nesta, hope on, and bear with true courage the suffering you may have to undergo before Morgan's eyes will be opened to see himself as he is, and to know your real worth."

CHAPTER XX.

Whoever craves for a lengthened term of life,
And despising moderation
Would live on, he cherishes evidently,
In my opinion, stupidity.
Since indeed a length of days
Has often brought us nearer grief.
And pleasant things are not to be found anywhere
If a person has fallen into excess
By his immoderate desires. But the only helper is Hades,
Which comes to all alike—when, without nuptial song,
Without lyre or festal dance,
Death appears plainly at the end.

SOPHOCLES.

AUNT MARY returned to Dermot Castle with Nesta and her baby. She was charmed with the apartment which had been prepared for her in the Eagle's Tower.

"It seems as if Morgan must have built up this high tower on purpose for me," said she, as she mounted up to the top and looked over the battlements. "It must be much higher than any of the original towers ever were, I should think; and what a splendid view over the glen to the east—

quite different from the other side. Those distant peaks must be the mountains that overlook Bantry Bay."

"They are; and he built it up to this height on purpose to obtain that view, for it extends all over poor Mr. O'Neil's property, and, when very clear, we can see the fine woods on the heights just above Kiloran."

"I see them now," said Aunt Mary, who was looking through the telescope they had brought up. "Look here, how lovely the prospect is!"

"No," said Nesta, with an involuntary shudder, "I have never looked through that glass since I saw—you know I told you—it was the evening before Roland was born."

"I remember it now; I had forgotten for that moment; but now an idea occurs to me, where did you last see that strange woman? I mean, where did she seem to disappear last night?"

"There! on the opposite side from where you have been looking, up the path leading over the mountains towards Dingleford Bay; but it was getting so dark I could not see as far as the mountain-top, but I

heard her dreadful laugh, and the words, 'I'll come again!' after she had disappeared."

Aunt Mary turned the telescope towards the part of the mountain which Nesta pointed out, and looked through it. But nothing was visible except the mossy stones and heath, and a few arbutus-trees, with their shining purple-green leaves, which had contrived to spring up between the clefts of the wall of the grey rocks, and those myriads of insects and butterflies which hum and buzz about such spots on sunshiny days. When they are thus brought near to us by a powerful telescope, we can fancy that we hear the hum of the bees as they gather honey from the wild flowers, and the chirrup of birds and rustle of the leaves, and that we smell the wild thyme and moss, and all those delicious perfumes which the air seems to breathe forth.

Aunt Mary said nothing, but she determined in her own mind to keep a look out, in hopes that if the mysterious woman could be seen to approach the castle, some means of seizing upon her might be devised. But she saw that Nesta was unable to endure any allusion to this horrible subject. There-

fore Aunt Mary endeavoured to prevent her from thinking of it by turning the conversation to other subjects—especially to the restorations and additions which had been made to the castle in so short a time. That night Aunt Mary wrote the following passages in her journal :

It seems to me that there are few more erroneous ideas than that the world in general—the masses of mankind—have profited by the modern discoveries and learning of the few ! Surely there is a greater amount of real ignorance (the kind of ignorance of which Socrates complained), ungodliness, and villany, in the present day, in proportion to the aggregate numbers of the population of the world ? Look, on the one hand, at the remains of ancient cities—read the accounts which history affords—examine the monuments still remaining, and you will see fewer indications of poverty and ignorance in those old times than in our own. And, on the other hand, look at the endless streets of miserable dwellings which now surround most great modern towns, and see whether all their inhabitants are well instructed or even well amused. Ugly misery is the chief

mark and stamp of this age. Masses of poor, who even if taught to read are seldom shown what is good, and still less often what is beautiful, occupy the towns! The mental condition of the common multitudes must have been better off when they had a far greater number of fine churches which they could enter at any moment, or when they had such splendid buildings, statues, and carved pictures to look at, as in such cities as Nineveh, Palmyra, or Balbec; and others in Egypt and in Greece.

What have poor Londoners—what have the populations of manufacturing towns to look at now? The face of beautiful nature itself is almost shut out from their view, and what have they to replace it but lines of blackened houses, more fit for the abode of a spirit of darkness than of a human being, who has to grope its way to eternal life and light!

What have they to look at in London but a few pictures in the small public galleries, or some tantalisingly splendid remains of ancient grandeur and beauty at the British Museum?

How a simple-minded poor person would stare, who had just emerged from his dark den or cellar, if you were to assure him that

he is far better off because he lives in this present developed and advanced state of the world—that he ought, therefore, to be a much happier man than his remote forefather was, who basked under the portico of that Temple of which he sees a model, and was surrounded with statues like those of the Parthenon and other ancient edifices.

He has, to be sure, the Houses of Parliament, which is certainly a very beautiful object (because it is well imitated from old models); but even that, owing to the superior (?) advancement of modern science and discernment in the choice of material, is, they say, crumbling away.

In our large modern towns the ugly works of man seem to shut out all that is divine. They hide the beauties of nature, without giving any indication of that hope and beauty which the works of God, in nature, possess. Whereas ancient buildings—the temples of ancient times, and the cathedrals of early Christian ages—*did* manifest hope and faith in a better state. They aspired to symbolise something better than this present world, and consequently inspired the beholder with hope and joy.

They evinced—these works of ancient days

—or at least they indicated a faith in something brighter and clearer than the dust-cloud or black smoke of misery which surrounds the poor now ! The sight of them must have inspired a hope of some higher enjoyment than the gin, or porter, or pipe, which must now too often be the poor man's beau ideal of bliss !

Without this aspiring Faith nothing good or beautiful can be produced. If a workman has no faith in, or hope of any higher enjoyment than that of the food or spirits which he can purchase with the produce of the day's labour, he will never work con amore at his art ; he will never put those higher qualities of the mind into his works which would make it a labour of love, and consequently excite admiration and pleasure in the beholders of its results.

Yet some persons smile with contempt at such notions as these, and exclaim, with self-sufficient satisfaction, "Oh, there is not sufficient poetry or feeling among the masses to make them so susceptible of beauty in the objects which surround them !"

If such is the case, it is because these so-called wise moderns have grovelled and debased it away by their inculcations of pre-

sent grasping avidity and utilitarianism. Men, in their modern crowding littleness, leave no space to inhale God's bounty, or look at his beauty.

"Think of the present, turn everything to account, and make it pay well," are the watchwords. And the levelling system—the system of unbeautifying, unornamenting—of building small, cheap houses—of clipping hedge-rows, of felling trees—leaves no shade in the country, no light or beauty in the towns.

We may, indeed, talk very conceitedly about the education of the world and the progress we have made; yet surely the men of early ages lived more intensely and vigorously—they left far deeper impressions on the "sands of time," more permanent foot-marks, than any persons are likely to do in these days, even with all extra facilities now afforded by the printing-press, and all the books published for the diffusion, or confusion, of useful knowledge.

The perusal of all the numerous books which are now published on the education of the world, and its progression, ought to make us very thankful to all the persons who in *former ages evinced their faith in*

things unseen—those who, in former times, instead of endeavouring to unsettle their neighbours' minds, bore testimony to the living, and vivifying, and happy-making faith which was in them. We ought to be all the more grateful for any sign, or picture, or building, which has preserved the proof that people once possessed this happy faith. When I have read any of these books which attempt to overthrow the happy Christian religion, I long to be able to multiply all these indications of ancient faith, because I am certain that many persons, who have not time to study and read sufficiently to establish in their own minds the faith which these subversive writers endeavour to destroy, must be deteriorated by them. Although I am sure that no one who has read and thought patiently can be the least shaken by objections which are only repetitions of those made long before the authors of these books were born; or else objections, caused by the fluctuating discoveries in geology and other sciences, or theories respecting the age of the world, and other questions in which no two professors agree; yet there are many others who, having no leisure for thought

or reading, may be unsettled by them. If we cannot say anything which can tend to strengthen belief in a revelation which is the only guide to happiness or hope of immortality hereafter—if we cannot assist the faith and consequent good efforts of other persons, we have no right to disturb “their landmarks” either by our words or example.

For it seems that since this *clear* revelation was bestowed on us, the guides which our Greek and other early forefathers possessed have almost disappeared. I mean that silent and unwritten “witness”—the proof of immortality, without which God never left mankind at any time, and which was peculiarly conspicuous among those nations which were led to the discernment of it by a cultivation and veneration for whatever was beautiful and good.

The barbarous nations which still exist in these enlightened modern days do not appear to possess this guide which the early Egyptians, and even those nations which were called barbarous by the Greeks and Romans, seemed then to have had. I am not aware that history or tradition tells us of any nations existing in those early ages

stupid to the same *degree* of ignorant brutality as the South Sea Islanders and cannibal nations of modern times. I repeat that those persons who are fortunate enough to believe in this revelation should more especially now endeavour to assist the faith of their neighbours, instead of endeavouring to subvert it: because the barbarism of the cannibal nations, as well as the spirit of wilful unbelief among the enlightened moderns, proves that the "witness" our pre-revelation forefathers possessed has been almost withdrawn since this Revelation has been bestowed.

Consequently, we are bound, on these grounds, as well as for higher reasons, to preach the Doctrines of Christianity to modern heathen nations, and endeavour to bring the light of its truth to shine on those persons among our own selves who, notwithstanding the unbroken chain of evidence afforded by eighteen centuries, are wilfully determined not to see, or feel, or hear the happy truth.

* * * * *

Thus wrote Aunt Mary as she sat that night in her turret-chamber, and watched the rays of moonlight lighting up the carved

oak, and glistening on the gilded flowers and fruit of the old stamped leather with which its walls were hung. For, throughout the whole castle, Morgan had endeavoured to recal the beauties of old times.

The next morning she proposed to Nesta to go over the castle and examine all its beauties. When last Aunt Mary saw it, which was on the eventful day when Nesta first met Morgan, it was quite a ruin. The windows of the banqueting-hall were now filled with old painted glass, which Morgan had procured from Flanders. There was a row of windows on both sides of the hall, so that, notwithstanding the mellowing effect of the elaborate tracery of stone-work which divided, in fantastic and graceful curves, the richly "storied" glass, plenty of light shone upon the inlaid floor, illuminating the grotesquely-carved oak rafters of the gothic roof, the music gallery at the farther end, and the raised daïs near the principal entrance.

On this raised space, a long carved table was placed laden with silver and gold plate, costly vases and candlesticks, and all the requisite dishes for a princely banquet. Two rows of tables extended down the hall, so

that at the period of little Roland's christening, six hundred persons sat down to dinner.

This hall opened into a large ball-room, which was not yet quite completed, but it had been used to dance in at the christening. The walls of this were to be lined with the marbles from the quarries which had lately been discovered on the property in the Shievedhue mountains. It was to be decorated with them in compartments, and in the centre of each compartment was to be a representation of flowers and fruit, or quaint devices after the fashion of the Florentine *pietra dura* mosaic. Some of the slabs had arrived, and although they were not yet put up in their intended places on the walls, Aunt Mary could judge of their excellence. Some were in the raised work, and the gorgeous colours of the fruit and flowers on the pale green marble ground, had a beautiful effect. The cornices and divisions between these pictured compartments were white, and there was to be a representation of the frieze which surrounds a celebrated Grecian temple round the upper part of the walls above the coloured *pietra dura* compartments. The coved ceiling was to be painted in fresco, and the floor made of all

the different coloured woods that grew on Morgan's own estates. Nesta showed the designs which Morgan had made for the floor, and Aunt Mary was surprised at the extreme good taste and originality evinced in the drawings.

"Every part of this building has been entirely planned by him," said Nesta, "and certainly it would be impossible to do more, or make a better use of his great possessions than he does. Besides employing such numbers of poor people in the quarries, he is always sending relays of workmen to learn the arts of inlaying and carving at Florence and Carrara, and he has established schools to teach carving in marble and wood and marqueterie work. Then he has managed the property so well, that it produces nearly a fourth more than it did. The income is increased by many thousands a year."

"Yes, he has genius," said Aunt Mary, "and in many ways it is well directed—but——"

"But there is one thing wanting—and I know what that is," said Nesta, with a sigh. "He has no faith. In vain I have implored him to build a chapel here, or a church at Carrigroghan, and to put some splendid and

lovely things like these to adorn it. I am afraid he does not believe in Revelation, although he has never told me so, or ever said anything that might lead me or any one else to suppose this."

"It must be so—and this want of faith, or rather, perhaps, want of capacity to acknowledge the existence of anything 'better than himself,' as Socrates said, describes that proud spirit of unbelief which produces those strange anomalies in his character that often perplex us."

"I am afraid so; and his life has always been so hurried—he rushes from one excitement to another—that it appears to me he never gives himself the leisure and repose requisite to contemplate eternity—to think of the Hereafter."

CHAPTER XXI.

But that, whatever is best for our city in this struggle
I implore that God will never unnerve.
Nor on God will I ever cease to cling for protection.
But if any one with contemptuous pride in his dealings
Or words, and unawed by justice
Has no reverence for the holy temples of the gods,
May an evil destiny seize him
On account of his despicable arrogance.
And if his gain be acquired unjustly,
And from what is unholy he should not abstain,
If presumptuously he seize what should be sacred from his grasp,
Can such a man ever pledge himself to ward off
From his soul the poisoned darts of his own heart,
For if such bad actions be held in honour,
Why should I lead the sacred chorus?
Never more could I approach the hallowed
Centre of the earth with venerating worship!
Nor enter the Temple at Abee,
Nor yet into that of Olympus,
Unless these precepts be seen plain as a sign post
To harmonise with the government of all mortals.

EURIPIDES.

Two more days passed without bringing any intelligence from Morgan, nor could any information be obtained about the missing will. Mr. Dromore had succeeded in obtaining a warrant to arrest Nelly O'More on suspicion of having by some unaccountable means obtained entrance into the room where

the will was kept. For the old woman's confused account of the banshee's appearance—the figure she saw passing through the garden in the direction of the mountain, resembled so closely the tall woman who had called herself Nelly O'More (when she appeared to Nesta opposite the terrace-garden), that Mr. Dromore felt he was justified in supposing they were one and the same. Moreover the hour (about nine o'clock when Nesta saw her), would just have allowed time for her to reach Dermot Castle by the short mountain-path from Mr. Ryan's house near Carrigtown, where the mysterious figure was seen about sunset. But Nelly O'More had never been seen or heard of in the neighbourhood for several years, and no one possessed any clue to her present abode.

Mrs. O'More's cabin at Glenfinlan was searched in vain, and the old woman declared she had never heard of her daughter since the birth of the child who lived in her cabin.

Father Murphy was equally ignorant of her abode. But when he was informed by Mr. Dromore that the strange woman who poor Nesta imagined had murdered her child, had now declared herself to be Nelly

O'More, he entered with all his heart into the search.

Hitherto he had believed the apparition to be either the creation of her own disordered imagination, or one of those supernatural appearances which are seen and heard in some ancient families when any fatal event is about to happen.

When Morgan had been absent nearly a week, he wrote from Kiloran to inform Nesta that he was obliged to go to Dublin on business, and should probably not be able to return for another week or more. He expressed his hopes that Aunt Mary was now staying at Dermot Castle; the whole letter was written in the same kindly tone with which he had lately treated her.

"He cannot have any suspicions about the will," said Nesta, with a feeling of great relief, as she showed the letter to Aunt Mary.

"I suppose not; at all events, you see he is naming the pensions for the old servants, taking possession of everything. Well, you have done all you could for Henry and his child, and as there seems no help for it, you must be satisfied to be the possessor of eighty thousand a year. You must bear the infliction," she added, with that mixture of

fun and pathos, which often kindled a smile on Nesta's face even in her saddest moments.

The following day Henry and Eva arrived at the Rectory with their child; there they all passed many happy hours and days together, and Nesta was often able to lay aside her apprehensions of Nelly O'More's threatened visit.

"She must have clambered up to the window of Mr. Ryan's house by that old pear-tree that grows on the back of it," said Henry, when he heard the story; "but it is very strange that she could have known the will was kept in that room; and what spite had she against me? However, it really does not matter. The estate ought justly to be Morgan's; he is now the representative of the family. It is right that my boy should have to fight his own way; a younger brother's child has no reason to expect otherwise."

"Then you are not for the division of a father's property equally among his children, as it is in France," said Aunt Mary, laughing.

"No," said he; "that simply means the ruin of their noblesse for ever. It is, moreover, an effectual means to prevent any other newer noblesse from rising up in the place of the old. It was the masterly invention

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of a despot ; it is the right hand of tyranny, a death-blow to liberty, to civilisation, to the development of the arts. The very heart of society becomes eaten out by this canker of selfishness. For my part, I am certain that Europe is relapsing into barbarism, and resolving into its original elements."

"What, did you think so when you and Eva went abroad for your last holiday?"

"Yes ; this fear, this coming dissolution of everything seemed to come especially before my eyes in beautiful France. The supercilious self-absorption of the ladies and gentlemen, so called—the bullying rudeness of the officials, struck me painfully in a nation once the most polished and refined in Europe. Society seemed still desolated by the smoking craters of its revolutions."

"Well, I have met with exceeding kindness in France," said Aunt Mary, "especially from those of the ancient régime, and the priests."

Eva could not help feeling very glad that Morgan was detained in Dublin by business, during the short week that Henry was able to pass with them, for she dreaded their meeting ; and, of course, Henry could not go to Dermot Castle when his brother was there ; thus there would be an end of the

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pleasant hours they spent there with Nesta, and lately, with Aunt Mary also.

Morgan's business in Dublin was at last satisfactorily settled, he said in a letter to Nesta, but he intended to visit Kiloran and make some final arrangements there before he returned to Dermot Castle. It was, therefore, more than a week after Henry had left Ireland that Morgan returned home. He expressed great delight at finding her and the child well, and complimented Aunt Mary on the care, he said, she had taken of his wife, so that if any report of Mr. O'Neil's lost will had reached his ears, he certainly succeeded in appearing quite ignorant of it. Aunt Mary said she must now return to Dingleford Castle, because poor Mrs. Verdon had been worse since Honoria left her, and as the new governess who had been engaged for little Alice had not yet arrived, she felt her presence at Dingleford Castle would be of use to the poor invalid.

Nesta did not want a companion, she told Morgan, now that he had returned, and that Eva was able to come and spend some hours with her on those days when Morgan visited the marble quarries and other distant parts of his property.

CHAPTER XXII.

Oh thou holy earth, and thou all-illuminating
Beams of the sun, look down and behold this
Abandoned woman before she move her blood-stained hand
To inflict the fatal blow against her children.
* * *

Do thou, oh Heaven-born light restrain her
Stay her hand, remove from this house the blood-stained Erinneys,
The influence of evil demons which has turned her into a fury.

EURIPIDES.

AT the base of the Eagle's Tower at Dermot Castle there was a small door, which opened upon a narrow flight of steps cut in the rock, and leading, by a series of zig-zags, straight down to the river.

This small kind of postern-door was the only exit to the castle besides the draw-bridge which spanned the chasm; but it could scarcely be called an exit, for it only led down to the Mermaid's Cave, a large natural cavern, which extended some way under the high rock on which the castle was built.

In rainy seasons, when the river was deep, it was impossible to reach the glen or any place from this cave, because the river completely covered a narrow bridge of bare rock along which a slippery footing could be obtained in dry seasons.

Nesta always kept the key of this post-ern-door herself, and Morgan had caused a wooden railing to be placed along the rude staircase that was cut in the almost perpendicular side of the rock, thinking that Nesta might like to go down on hot days and enjoy the cool freshness of the Mermaid's Cave—the spot where she first saw him jump across the rocks over her head!

In fine summer days it was a pleasant retreat. The echoing sound of the torrent and more distant waterfall, the cool spray, and its rainbow hues called into existence by the mid-day sun that penetrated into the glen, had a soothing and mysteriously-beautiful effect. But Nesta did not often go down into its strange and slippery depths, and never ventured there alone. However, one day, when Nesta was showing Eva all the improvements, the latter, after visiting the banqueting-hall and looking down from the summit of the Eagle's

Tower, expressed a wish to go down to the Mermaid's Cave.

It was a warm, almost sultry, afternoon, and they lingered there talking for some time, for Eva thought there was less chance of being overheard there than in any of the rooms of the castle. So they discoursed on the various subjects of importance to them, and did not perceive how the time flew by until the deepening shadows warned them it was late.

"Let us go back to the castle," said Nesta, as a sudden fear came over her—that sort of mysterious shadow which she had previously felt when the strange woman was approaching.

She looked round in the dark recesses of the cave, half expecting to see the figure with the red hood.

Immediately afterwards a laugh—the loud shrieking laugh—resounded through the glen, but it sounded as if from the outside of the cave. They looked up, and saw advancing towards them, down the steep mountain-side, the tall figure with the red hood. It stopped on the opposite declivity, just at the spot where Morgan had jumped across, and looked down at the two

trembling friends, who clung to each other far below.

"Ha, ha! I am come for your first-born son—I am come for the base O'Neil's boy, and neither wall, nor battlement, nor torrent, nor bolts and bars of iron, will keep me from my foe!"

Another of those awfully-triumphant shrieks that Nesta remembered so well, and they saw the figure bound across the ravine, and alight on the ledge of rock that overhung the mouth of the cave, close to one of the windings of the rocky stairs.

Nesta instinctively emerged from the cave, and looked up; she could then see the figure flying up the steps and through the postern-door, which they had left open.

"The child! she will murder my boy!" cried Nesta, who, in her frantic haste to follow the murderous creature, would, most probably, have fallen into the torrent if Eva had not supported her, and they hurried up the steps. But, on reaching the top, they found, to their horror, that the door was closed and locked. The key had been left in it by Nesta when they went down to the cave, and the woman must have taken it out and locked it on the

other side. So they were locked out! They called loudly for help, but that part of the castle was uninhabited, and no one seemed to hear their agonised cries. From the spot where they stood they could see the narrow terrace in front of the library, and now they feared the woman was going towards it, for the sound of that triumphant laugh resounded in that direction.

The next moment they saw her emerge from the library window—oh, horror! The child, little Roland, was in her arms!

She looked round towards Nesta, and held him up with a wild shriek of triumph; then advanced to the parapet wall and held him over the yawning abyss.

Nesta could see no more—everything swam before her eyes, and she would have fallen down the steps on which they stood if Eva had not held her in her arms.

Eva's eyes were raised to the terrace on which the dreadful woman was standing, who continued, with the savage exultation of a beast of prey, to hold the child over the chasm, while she looked round in wild triumph to see the effect the sight produced on the unfortunate mother.

Eva shrieked out, "Will no one help?"

There was no answer. The woman seemed to be absorbed in her enjoyment of the effect produced on Nesta by the awful sight of her child overhanging the abyss, and gloated over a prolongation of the agony she inflicted.

How long this dreadful scene lasted there was no means to determine, for such moments seem many hours to those who witness them as actors. Eva herself began to grow dizzy at the sight by which her eyes were horribly fascinated. But now, through the dim twilight, another form was seen to approach with the stealthy tread of a wild Indian, and in a second more the figure with the red cloak was struggling in the powerful grasp of Morgan O'Neil.

A fearful struggle ensued, for, woman though she was, her strength seemed almost equal to his own, and at one instant Eva almost expected to see her hurl both Morgan and his child into the dark abyss.

At length, by an extreme effort, he succeeded in wrenching the child from her arms. That effort, however, in its success, caused him to stagger back several paces, and the recoil from the suddenly-loosened clutch threw her backwards over the parapet into the yawning chasm beneath.

A wail of agony—then a loud splash in the river, echoed up amid the overhanging rocks. They saw the red hood float for a moment, and then disappear in the water.

Morgan looked down, apparently to see whether all traces of the wretched woman were gone; then, turning round, saw Eva supporting the almost lifeless form of Nesta.

In a moment he divined the full horror of their position, and, rushing into the library with the child in his arms, he traversed the castle and unlocked the postern gate. Nesta was still unconscious, but he put the little child's arms round her neck, and implored her to open her eyes. Then, turning to Eva with an expression of countenance which evinced more emotion than she had before given him credit for being able to feel, he said, "I know now that Nesta was right, and that her baby was murdered by that woman. If I had not happened to look out on the terrace just now, when I returned home, my boy would have been murdered too."

Eva took up the child, and Morgan carried Nesta into the castle. There placing her on a sofa, and kneeling down by her side, he implored her to forgive him—to open her eyes and bless him with a word or

look of pardon—and in his frantic despair he accused himself of having killed her.

The nurse, who had been sitting by the child's cradle, was found lying on the floor insensible, stunned by a blow from Nelly O'More.

Search was made in the river for the body of the unfortunate woman, but it was never found. And then the peasants said it never would be ; for, as they asserted, that part of the river, which was called the Black Pool, was bottomless. It probably did communicate with some underground cavern, for there was a sort of gurgling whirlpool usually there when the river was not very full, giving the impression that there was some other outlet than through the current of the river.

For some hours after the awful scene just described Nesta remained insensible, and when at last she recovered consciousness, her nerves seemed to be so much shaken, that the doctor apprehended a brain fever would ensue. She became delirious that night—fancied her boy was being dashed to pieces before her eyes, and even though he was held up before her, she could not be convinced of his safety. For many days her

life was despaired of. Eva attended her night and day, and Morgan had succeeded in persuading Aunt Mary to come there also, for he told her he had more confidence in her curative powers than in those of any physician. But for some time even her efforts were unavailing, and both she and Eva thought that Nesta's wearied spirit would soon enter into its rest. But it seemed to them both that the poor sufferer was making a strong effort to live. She would smile up in their watchful anxious faces and bid them be of good cheer; for she thought that God would enable her to live for the sake of her child whose life He had so miraculously saved; "and for Morgan's too," she whispered to Aunt Mary, "for I see, I feel, now he is beginning really to love me."

At last they were rewarded by the gradual return of her strength, and a few weeks afterwards, Nesta being sufficiently recovered to bear the journey, they all went to Knutsford Hall.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Sovereignty is often indeed foolishly praised,
And its aspect is pleasant, but its home life on the other hand
Is troublesome. For is that man really blessed—is he fortunate—
Who in terror and in guarding against violence drags through
His lifelong existence? As a commoner would I live
In prosperity, rather than be a sovereign despot,
Whose pleasure it is to have the wicked for friends,
And who hates the good, fearing to die.

EURIPIDES.

SEVEN years have passed unmarked by any particular event. Nesta had not yet returned to Ireland. Each year she had wished, yet feared to do so. She had spent the season in London, and autumn at Knutsford Hall. In the mean while the extreme anxiety which Morgan had evinced during the period of her danger gradually diminished as she recovered her usual health, and, after a time, was replaced by the same cold kindness with which he formerly treated her, so that she did not feel that, after all, she had made much progress in exciting any deeper feeling in his heart.

In London she saw very little of him,

yet she did not hear of his being so much in Honoria's set as formerly. Several vague reports reached her that other leading queens of fashion had succeeded in exciting those tokens of his admiration which the still beautiful Lady Glenmaurice had been wont more exclusively to usurp. But she was unwilling to believe any of these rumours.

Nesta often lamented being an absentee from the country to which they owed by far the larger portion of their income. Therefore, as her health was now stronger than it had ever been, and the sad associations connected with that country became less painful, she offered to accompany Morgan there.

He expressed great pleasure at hearing of this determination, but observed that instead of going to reside at either Carrigroghan or Dermot Castle, they should principally live at a small kind of shooting-box he had built in a wild and remote part of the Shievedhue mountains, near the marble works.

He described the place, Eyrie Lodge, as quite a cottage, but when Nesta arrived there, she found that a most charming little residence had sprung up in the midst of a kind of forest-like wood, high up amidst the lofty mountain range.

She had never seen the spot before, and her admiration of the scenery (which was entirely of a different character from that of any of their other houses) was unbounded. The house was on a small scale, and the rooms low, but there was a charming little apartment looking out on the grassy slope that extended down to the old forest; and in the library she found a collection of all her favourite books, from her own boudoir at Dermot Castle, ready for her use. The contrast between this tiny abode to her other houses, formed by its complete change an additional pleasure. In this remote spot there were no near neighbours, except Mrs. O'Malley and her daughters, who lived about two miles off, on the other side of the wooded height, the continuation of the ridge which formed the high part of the Shievedhue mountains, and the Glenmaurices. Their castle was about three miles off by the road, but there was a much shorter footpath over the mountain, which passed close to the high tower which Nesta had seen through her telescope from Dermot Castle.

But this tower could not be seen from the new cottage; nor, indeed, any object that was known to her before, or was in any way

associated with the other places. Morgan said that he had fixed on the spot for that very purpose, that she should not meet with any known landmark, any object which could remind her that she was not in Germany or some other country.

The Glenmaurices were not in Ireland that summer. Nesta had seen very little of them of late years. They were now in Italy, but they had left their children in Ireland, as the bracing air of these mountains was considered more healthy than their place in Scotland.

Little Roland was much pleased with this wild scenery. The contrast it formed to the comparatively flat and tame country round their Yorkshire home, was peculiarly attractive to his excitable and adventurous nature.

He had, of course, no recollection of their former visit to Ireland, except a dim impression of having been swung over a deep abyss by a dreadful creature, and rescued by his father. So that the high mountains, rushing torrents, and silvery waterfalls, among which Eyrie Lodge was situated, had all the charms of complete novelty, and he longed to climb up immediately to the summit of every mountain he saw.

Nesta found the task of curbing his wild and ungovernable nature extremely difficult; in fact, she feared no one had much influence over the hot-tempered and wayward boy, except his father, and he did not always exert it judiciously.

His anxiety lest the boy should get into danger was so great, that he punished him much too severely for what was no greater error than the natural propensity of a wild boy to climb up trees and get himself into all manner of dangerous positions, while he left many real faults unnoticed and unpunished.

They had scarcely been over the house, or looked at the lovely views from the different windows, when Roland exclaimed that he must go up to the top of the mountain and see the sun set. "It will be such a glorious sight."

"Well, I will take you there, my boy, if you will make me a promise that you will never attempt to go alone. There is a dangerous bog on the other side, hidden under smooth-looking mossy turf, which would engulf a horse and rider, and if you were to step on it you would sink down and down and never be heard of any more. And there are loose rocks that would slip

under your feet and precipitate you down hundreds of feet. I will take you there; but we must not remain to see the sun set, for it would be too dark to find our way home afterwards. But we shall see it gloriously on our return from the upper forest glen at the back of this house."

"I'll take care, indeed I will," said the impatient boy, as he pulled his father away; and they soon disappeared up the mountain-side. They did not return to the lodge until long after sunset; but there was such a bright moon that Nesta was tempted to go out on the lawn and admire the splendid view. Soon after, she heard a bounding step on the grass, and her boy's arms were thrown round her neck.

"Oh, mamma, I never saw such a darling lady in all my life—a lovely little girl with most heavenly blue eyes—and she is to be my wife. Yes—I am determined she shall—although papa says it is so foolish to think of it."

"Who is she—who can he have seen up in these wild mountains?" inquired Nesta.

"I'll tell her; let me tell mamma all about it!" said the eager boy, as he stopped his father's mouth with his hand. "And such a pretty name, too, Lady—Letitia—

Glenmaurice. Letitia! I will carve that beautiful name on all the trees here, and engrave it on the rocks. And there is a beautiful echo out there by the waterfall, and it has been repeating the name ever so many times. Letitia! Listen! Hark! Did you hear it? There is one here too; but it is not half so loud as the other up by the waterfall."

The butler came out to announce dinner, and as little Roland was very hungry after his long mountain walk, there was a break in the enthusiastic description he was about to give of Letitia's charms. After the meal, although he was very sleepy, he could not be prevailed on to go to bed, until his father had promised to take him over the mountain to see Letitia the next morning.

Nesta had a vivid recollection of the child with the shy blue eyes—the little Letitia she had seen in Kensington Gardens seven years before, when she had been struck by a kind of likeness in colouring and expression to her own lost baby. And she had often and often longed to see the little thing again. So she could not help feeling much pleased at the idea that Letitia was now living so near, although she had a disagreeable recollection of a cross-looking nurse who took

the child out of her arms, and she remembered that the same woman might possibly object to allow much intercourse between the children here. She fancied, also, that Morgan seemed annoyed at the meeting between his boy and the Glenmaurice children. For when Nesta said something after Roland had gone to bed, to the effect that perhaps they might prove to be pleasant companions for the boy, he shook his head, and said, "No, that would never do, for they are utterly spoilt;" and he added, with a kind of bitterness which Nesta had not witnessed for a long time, "Lady Glenmaurice does not care for her children—I don't believe she would be much concerned if they all turned out badly, or if they came to some untimely end."

"And that poor little girl—is she really neglected?" inquired Nesta.

"Yes," he replied, "as far as any child must be, who has no parents or instructors that care for it—at least so I imagine. But perhaps they may have some better nurses or governesses than they had when I was here last year." And Morgan took up the paper with that kind of bored look that made Nesta imagine that he did not wish to speak any more on the subject.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Alas! how I always abhor an evil doing man,
Who, devising unjust deeds, then decorates them
With crafty wiles. A common good man as a friend
I would rather choose, than a bad one who is more clever.
EURIPIDES.

THE next morning Roland declared that he had dreamt of his beautiful Letitia. "I saw her," he said, "standing on the other side of the waterfall; her long hair shone like gold in the sunshine, and her eyes looked like those glistening stars that I see after a beautiful sunset; and she beckoned to me with her hand to come across. But there was no way except through the rushing stream; and I tried to leap over, and then fell into the torrent, and was carried down, down ever so far; but she ran along by the side, and tried to pull me out, and looked so miserable, and then I woke. Oh, mamma, I hope she will never look so miserable as I saw her in my dream! And now,

papa, you are going to take me to Maurice Castle—oh yes, you promised me last night.”

“Well, we will see ; but I must first go and talk to my agent at the marble quarries.”

“Oh, how delightful to find marble—what, real marble, like what all the beautiful coloured chimney-pieces and tables at Knutsford Hall are made of—do they grow here? And you are going to paint all the morning, are you not, mamma?” asked the eager boy, as he saw his mother getting out her sketch-book and colours. “You must make a picture of the waterfall there, up among those trees at the back, where the echo is. Let me show mamma the view ; she could come with us as far as that, could not she, papa?”

“Certainly ; and we will carry her drawing materials and camp-stool.”

It was not above ten minutes' walk from the house, but the scenery had that wild and remote look which one seldom finds in the immediate neighbourhood of any dwelling ; such a scene as Salvator Rosa loved to paint—where the primeval forest seemed never to have been touched by the hand of

man—where riven pines lay across the torrent, and oaks scathed by storms or lightning-blast were half imbedded in tangled underwood, which had sprung up among their giant roots.

It was, indeed, a spot to enchant an artist, for, except, perhaps, in wild parts of Calabria or Dalmatia, nowhere in Europe could be found that peculiarly ancient look—a bit of undisturbed nature—a gem of scenery untouched for ages, untrodden, except by the hunter or the outlaw.

After Roland had made his mother listen to the echo's oft-repeated "Letitia," and they had established her with all the drawing apparatus in a good point of view, they proceeded up the mountain.

Nesta had considerable talent for painting, and she had cultivated it so well, that she was now one of the best amateur painters of the day.

The enjoyment afforded by the exercise of her proficiency in such a scene was great, and on the many fine days which the capricious climate of Ireland allowed her during the summer, or rather autumn months, Nesta was able to paint a number of beautiful pictures.

One day, shortly after their arrival, as she was taking a sketch high up on the mountain, and near a rough bridle-road that led in zig-zags down the precipitous side, her attention was arrested by screams—the cries of a child shrieking for help; and, looking up in the direction from whence the sound seemed to come, she saw the flutter of a white frock in the path far above her head, and heard the clatter of horse's hoofs. Lower it came, and then, at the sudden turn of the road, she could distinguish a pony, evidently running away, with a little girl on his back.

It dashed furiously along the path till it came to another turn. In the sudden swing round the sharp corner the child was thrown off, and fell over the side of the precipice!

Down she came, till her dress caught in a wild arbutus-tree that grew in a cleft of the rock, just over the spot where Nesta was standing.

In an agony of fear she called out to the child, "Hold the tree—take hold of it with your hands, and hold fast—hold it tight!"

The child seemed to hear her voice, for it

extended its poor little arms, and succeeded in catching hold of a branch.

"Hold on firmly, darling," repeated Nesta, "and I will come to you."

Poor Nesta was not a good climber, but, in the energy of despair, she contrived to procure a footing on the loose stones or bank, and then, by making a little circuit, she was able to approach within a few yards of the arbutus-trees. But alas! the rock that still intervened between her and the child was quite perpendicular, and she despaired of finding any safe footing. Yet she endeavoured to sustain the child's hopes of rescue, and then she herself called loudly for help.

She could see the poor child's frock gradually tearing; the little feet now seemed to move, as if trying to find (though vainly) some footing on which to rest.

"Don't move, darling; remain quite still; don't move your feet, only hold on to the branch."

Again Nesta shrieked in terror, lest the child should be dashed to pieces before her eyes; but there was no answer, save from the echo which prolonged their cries. And Nesta became so dizzy that she was scarcely

able to maintain herself in her own most dangerous position.

All the objects seemed to swim before her eyes, and it seemed that ages had passed, when she felt a strong arm round her waist, and she was lifted up and carried down to the waterfall by Morgan.

"The child!—the child!" she shrieked; for, on looking up, she perceived it was no longer clinging to the tree.

"She is safe," said Morgan; "Roland was able to rescue her. He clambered up from the lower path while I came up to save you, for if you had fallen you must have been dashed to pieces."

Roland's delight at having been the means of saving Letitia's life was unbounded. He jumped in his wild glee round and round the spot where he had laid her down on the grass. But Nesta perceived at once that the poor child was severely hurt. She could not stand when she attempted to rise from the ground; and, on examination, Nesta found that her leg was broken.

Morgan contrived to catch the runaway pony, and, jumping on its back, rode off to the house for help, and sent immediately for a doctor from Carrigtown.

The servants soon came, according to his orders carrying a bed, on which the child was placed.

He also sent off to Lord Glenmaurice's to tell them of the accident, and in less than an hour three boys, two nurses, a governess, and tutor, came over to see what had happened to the child. They all waited with wondering, noisy clamourings at Eyrie Lodge until the doctor arrived, and then he said that the child would not be able to move for some time, as it was a very bad case of fracture in two places. So, after these wild boys had wandered all over the house and garden, made a great deal of noise, and vociferated their surprise and contempt at a great deal they saw, they were captured by the tutor, and taken home. That unfortunate individual told Nesta privately that he was going to leave in a few days, for he found it impossible to manage the children; and that, combined with the dulness of Maurice Castle, was more than he could stand.

Nesta was much relieved to see that the disagreeable-looking nurse, who had deprived her of little Letitia's smiling welcome in Kensington Gardens, did not appear.

Miss Dolman, the governess, expressed extreme anger that Letitia had disobeyed her orders, which were never to go down that side of the mountain. The child replied she did not intend to do so, but that the pony ran away with her, and she could not direct it or stop it, though she tried very hard to turn back.

"Well, it will be a caution to you for the future, I trust; and now I hope you will be very good, and give this kind lady as little trouble as possible, for I must return to the castle, because everything will get into confusion there without me."

So she kissed the child with the same kind of business-like air which characterised her movements and discourse. It was not unkind, but Nesta saw that it was unsympathising, and she feared that the rough, hard featured, though, perhaps, strong-minded, sensible woman, was not exactly fitted to influence that shy, delicate-looking child.

CHAPTER XXV.

I know indeed those ills I am about to dare,
But rage overcomes my better reason,
And this truly is the cause of the greatest woes to mortals.
EURIPIDES.

THE ensuing months were almost the happiest Nesta had ever yet spent. The delight of being loved by the interesting little Letitia; the consciousness that she was of real use to that child (whose mind and disposition had received no cultivation), by inculcating the first true religious principles she had ever received, was to Nesta an absorbing interest, a pleasure hitherto unknown to her. Little Roland's affection for Letitia seemed also daily to increase, and his anxiety to amuse the little sufferer and do everything to please her, was instrumental in developing his best qualities. The rude speeches in which he too often indulged—the riotous step and clamorous shout were hushed into

gentleness when he entered the room where she lay.

The child had a severe illness, and was obliged to lie on the sofa for a long time after her accident. And Nesta often looked forward through the dim vista of future years, with ardent hopes that this childhood's fancy would be ripened into an enduring love, which would conduce to the happiness of both.

Morgan went to Kiloran a few days after the accident, and his absence enabled Nesta to devote more time to Letitia than before, and for some weeks the enjoyment she felt at witnessing the improvement in both the children was uninterrupted. Everything seemed to prosper, for a new tutor, who arrived a few days after the accident, seemed to acquire an influence over Roland, and succeeded in inducing him to study—a result which had hitherto baffled all the attempts of governesses or masters.

Florentine had entered Nesta's service soon after the awful catastrophe of Nelly O'More being drowned in the torrent, and she proved to be a most valuable servant. She was, indeed, more—for her refined taste and capacity to appreciate all that was good,

rendered her often almost a companion to Nesta in the many lonely hours she spent when her husband was away. And now she attended on the little Letitia during her long illness with all the tenderness and skill of an experienced nurse. She anticipated her every want, and always contrived to amuse her when Nesta was obliged to be absent, which, after Morgan returned home from Kiloran, was often the case. Three or four happy months thus slipped by, when one evening Letitia (who could not yet walk without help) expressed a wish to have some blackberries. Roland had brought her some the day before, which he said grew in the wood beside the waterfall; and Letitia enjoyed them more than any of the costly fruits that daily came from the hot-houses of Carrigroghan. The boy was engaged with his tutor in the study, so Florentine said she should go and gather some for her; there would be still sufficient light to enable her to pick them, and she was sure she could find the way.

Nesta was sitting beside the child's sofa, reading to her; the short autumnal evening soon closed in, candles were brought, and still Nesta continued to read.

They were both so much absorbed in the tale, that little Letitia forgot all about the blackberries, and Nesta did not remember that Florentine had gone to fetch them. She proceeded, therefore, with the tale until the clock struck nine, and Nesta's tea was brought in, and then it occurred to her to ask if Florentine had returned. The butler replied that she was not down stairs. However, just as they were wondering why she remained out so late, she came into the house, but looking so pale and frightened, that Nesta was sure something alarming had occurred.

On questioning her, Nesta saw that she was endeavouring to look composed, and she declared that nothing was the matter, only she had lost her way in looking for the blackberries, and was afraid of being benighted in the forest. "It was so dark—so dark, I could not see where I put my foot, and thought I might tumble into the river, that was all."

Nesta felt convinced it was not all, but she fancied that Florentine might be unwilling to speak before the child, and therefore forbore to question her further at that time.

However, on being asked afterwards, Florentine would tell her nothing more. But she suddenly asked, with a look of extreme anxiety, whether Aunt Mary was expected in Ireland, for she should like so much to see her, or Mr. Henry O'Neil? and Nesta told her that Aunt Mary was expected at Dingleford Castle the following week, but she did not think Eva and her husband could come to Ireland this year.

"And Miss Bridgeman will come here, I suppose, will she not?"

"Oh, I hope so," said Nesta; "but not for some time, as she will be anxious to remain with Mrs. Verdon."

This conversation occurred when Nesta was undressing that night; and when she was taking leave of her, Florentine said:

"But Monsieur O'Neil not yet returned home—is it not very late?"

Nesta explained that she did not expect him, for when he went out early in the morning, he told her that he should probably sleep at Carrigtown, as he had business in that neighbourhood.

"But Monsieur was here—he was——" she stopped with a look of extreme embarrassment, and muttered something about having,

she supposed, "taken one of the keepers for him—that tall Mr. Macnamara, I must have thought was Monsieur O'Neil."

Nesta felt sure that something important had occurred; but when she again endeavoured to make Florentine disclose it, she repeated that it was nothing—only the fear of being lost in the wood among the rivers and waterfalls.

CHAPTER XXVI.

When base things appear right to those persons who are deemed noble,
They will most assuredly appear so to those who are of low condition.

EURIPIDES.

MORGAN did not return home till a late hour the following day, and Nesta fancied that he looked ill, and as if something had occurred to annoy him. But he laughed when she asked him, and said it was nothing, only he had a fall from his horse the evening before, and his left arm was a good deal bruised.

Nesta then, when he threw off his cloak, perceived that he had it in a sling. He said that he should have returned the preceding evening if the accident had not occurred, but he thought it prudent to see Dr. Maloney, and therefore had slept at Carrigtown instead of returning home. Indeed, he now appeared so much shaken by the fall, that

Nesta began to feel quite alarmed. But he endeavoured to allay her fears, and said he should go to bed immediately, and should be all right in the morning.

Florentine did not appear to have regained her wonted composure. She was evidently still suffering from the fright she experienced at losing her way in the wood on the previous evening.

Nesta perceived that the evening after Morgan's return her hand trembled so, that she could scarcely untie her dress, or comb her hair.

"I am sure you caught cold last night from remaining out so long," said Nesta.

"Ah, pray, Madame, say nothing of it; do not mention—do not say I was out last night," said she, in a low whisper; "pray do not mention it to *him*," she added, pointing to Morgan's room, which was next. "Not for worlds would I have him know I was there; for your own—for all our sakes, never say that I was not at home in this house last night." And she threw herself on her knees before Nesta, and implored her to give her this promise.

Nesta readily promised her that she would not say a word about her having been out

in the wood as she wished her not ; but she could not help expressing her astonishment at her anxiety.

The next morning Morgan was very ill, and when he attempted to rise, fell back. Nesta was extremely alarmed, and said she would send immediately for Dr. Maloney ; but he begged her not to do so, saying he had not a high opinion of him. He added, he wished to consult the doctor near Kiloran, if she would not dislike going there. He observed, moreover, that it was getting very cold up in these high grounds, and it would be better for them all to go to a warmer place.

Nesta was a good deal surprised at this observation, because he never before cared for heat or cold. But she expressed her willingness to go wherever he liked.

He seemed to be considerably relieved at her ready acquiescence, while she was obliged to conceal the regret she felt at the pleasant party being broken up, and at the prospect of leaving Letitia. She might not see her again for years—perhaps never ! And she turned away on the pretext of preparing for departure, but in reality to hide the tears that would force themselves into her eyes at

the thought of having to bid adieu to the child.

Florentine did not seem so much surprised at this sudden determination to leave Eyrie Lodge as Nesta expected; but she expressed the greatest sorrow at leaving Letitia. "However," she added, "Madame would have been obliged to part from *la belle ange* some day—and perhaps better now—better *now*, for they must part some day," she repeated, with an absent air, as she mechanically set about the packing.

Letitia was well enough to be moved, and Nesta was on the point of asking Morgan whether he thought Lady Glenmaurice would consent that the child should accompany them to Kiloran; but, as if he divined her thoughts, he said:

"You had better send Letitia at once to Maurice Castle. Roland will, I dare say, want to see her safe over the mountain; but he must be brought back as quickly as possible, that he may be in time to accompany us to Kiloran, and all the servants must go with us, because the house there is quite unprepared; therefore do not leave any one here—I think it better this house should be left empty."

"Then you think that Letitia had better not go with us to Kiloran?" Nesta ventured to inquire.

"Certainly not—it would appear extremely strange—it would appear as if we thought she could not be taken proper care of by those governesses and people Lady Glenmaurice has left in charge of her children. And remember that all the servants are to go with us, as there are none at all at Kiloran."

Morgan was endeavouring to dress himself, but he was so giddy that he could scarcely stand, and appeared to be so very ill, that when Nesta saw he was anxious to leave the place, she hastened their departure as much as possible, and lost no time in sending Roland off with poor little Letitia and a nurse.

It was a most painful parting. The child clung to Nesta, and exhibited excessive grief at the dreadful prospect of being separated from her. She declared that she loved her better than anybody in the whole world, and must always call her mamma; that she must marry Roland, and then she would really be her child.

"Don't let him forget me—pray for me,

darling mamma, and I will pray for you ; and when I look at the beautiful sunset, and see the moonbeams glistening on the sea, and when I hear the birds singing among the sweet jasmine, I think I shall feel as if you were near me, for they are all so like you."

Morgan manifested great impatience until the children had started with the tutor, and paced the room in a state of irritation which surprised and perplexed Nesta. He continued to press forward the preparations for departure with a kind of irritability and ill humour which Nesta endeavoured to look upon as the consequence of his illness, and the pain he must suffer from the bruise on his arm.

The tutor and Roland returned in about two hours, by which time everything was ready for their departure.

Roland declared he should never be happy again, and the tutor said that he had had the greatest difficulty in separating the two children.

CHAPTER XXVII.

But there is with the gods a still superior might,
And often when irremediable evils,
And anguish hard to bear, hang over us,
It raises the cloud which covered our eyes.

ÆSCHYLUS.

AUNT MARY did not hear that the De Lacys had quitted Eyrie Lodge until she herself arrived at Dingleford Castle.

Her disappointment was great, for the letters Nesta had written from the new mountain lodge were so full of happiness, and she had described the kind of life she led in that romantic spot with her boy, his tutor, and the interesting little Letitia, in such unusually glowing colours, that Aunt Mary had anticipated the visit to her there with much pleasure.

A day or two after her arrival a letter informed her that Morgan was dangerously ill at Kiloran, and obliged to be kept so quiet that Nesta could not venture to ask

her to come there. Aunt Mary could not help feeling unreasonably surprised at the news. There was really no reason why Morgan should not be ill as well as any one else; but vigorous vitality was so thoroughly identified with her notion of him, that she could hardly contemplate him on a sick-bed.

"But it may be of use to him," she thought; "I dare say his excessive vigour of constitution has been a trial to him. "Physical suffering, of whatsoever kind, is a very practical monitor."

Several days elapsed; no letter came; she began to feel alarmed on Nesta's account, and resolved to call at the Rectory, in hopes—that Mr. Dromore might have had news from Kiloran.

On her way she stopped at Father Murphy's, and, while she was talking to him, a barefooted girl came running up to the door in breathless haste, saying,

"Yah then, yer riverence, will ye come and see the mistress? Sure an' it was she that tauld me to ask yer riverence to come up to the cabin as quick as lightning, and if ye would mount the pony it would be all the better, for it's far ye'll have to go."

"Up to Glenfinlan, ye mane?"

"Sure that's what it's called, but it's a great way beyond that entirely yer riverence would have to go, and I'm to bring Jerry Dorogan and Mick Malowney, if I can lay eyes on them, with two spades in their hands. So, if yer riverence will catch the pony, I'll go and catch the boys."

So saying, she ran off at full speed towards the village.

"What can the Widow O'More want with me, and the boys and two spades?" said Father Murphy, as he rubbed the side of his nose with a meditative air.

"Has she been ill?" inquired Aunt Mary.

"Not that I've heard of," said he; "but, nevertheless, I'll do her bidding."

Aunt Mary surmised that perhaps Mrs. O'More knew something of the long-missing will, and felt a strong inclination to accompany the good father. But the distance was so great she feared it would be useless to attempt it. Therefore she left him, and proceeded on her way to the Rectory.

The barefooted girl soon returned with the "boys" and the spades, the good father mounted his pony, and they all proceeded up to Glenfinlan.

They found the widow watching outside her cabin door, and, as soon as she saw Father Murphy, she beckoned him to come into the room. When the door was shut after them she whispered some words in his ear.

He started, and exclaimed, "It can't be true—I'll not believe it!"

"Go and look with your own eyes. Remember the spot: under the big black stone that lies at the roots of an old tree on the river bank, right above the waterfall in the fairies' glen."

Father Murphy repeated the words after her, as if to imprint them firmly on his mind, and then said, "In the fairies' glen—and where is that?"

"It's good five miles from here, and I'll direct ye the way over the mountain. It's nigh where they've built a fine bran new lodge."

Then she went out and pointed out the way to the men, and explained to them the direction they were to take in order to reach the spot they were to visit.

"The fairies' glen—and where's that?" said Mick.

"Och, I know where the fairies' glen is

well enough," said Jerry. "By the same token though, I niver set foot in it, and niver would, save and except it's to go wid his riverence, for the Lord 'll be 'twixt him and harm, and he'll say a prayer for us, and keep the good people from working us any ill luck at all, at all."

So the party proceeded in the direction pointed out by the Widow O'More. The road or track across the mountain which they had to pass was very indistinct; but Jerry was confident that he knew the way, and sure enough, in about an hour and a half, when they had passed a mountain ridge, they came in sight of the new lodge in the forest. There was no one stirring, nor any smoke from the chimneys, as Jerry said, "to show that Christian folk lived there. But I thought what it would be when I heard the O'Neil was raising stones and making edifications on the good people's domains. Says I to Judy, No good ever comes o' invading them, nor ever did, since the days of the blessed Saint Patrick. Long life to him!"

Here the river came tumbling and rumbling down the stony glen with a thundering roar that was enough to warn off all intruders; and the sound of rushing water

guided them to the cascade. It was the same spot that Nesta had painted, and on the rocky heights above it were the black-berry-bushes where Florentine had searched for fruit to please the little Letitia.

Father Murphy and his companions climbed up the rocks and reached the upper bank of the river which formed the cascade; and there, near the roots of an old tree, they found the "big black stone." The good father directed them to use their spades and move it; but, before they did so, all remarked that the earth had been lately moved and turned down again.

"She is right after all," he thought, as he watched the proceedings of the men; "for here it is, just as she said."

After a few minutes' work the stone was raised, and the men uttered an exclamation of horror. In the hollow beneath lay the dead body of a man.

"Sure, then, it's Michael Hennessy himself, it is," said Father Murphy, as he looked down into the hollow.

"May the Lord save us, your riverence! However did this come here?" said Jerry, as he knelt down and looked at the ghastly figure.

"That's no business of ours," said Father

Murphy. "But now mind, if we are summoned as witnesses, we must declare that we found the body here. See, on the forehead is a deep wound. And now I'll pray for his sowl."

The men had taken off their hats and joined in the prayer with that real fervent devotion generally evinced by the poor Irish. They usually have great faith; and, besides this, Father Murphy possessed unbounded influence over his parishioners, so that when he begged them to keep the discovery a secret, without questioning his motive, they readily promised to do so. He made them remark the dress, and bade them notice particularly various signs which might prove the means of identifying the corpse with Michael Hennessy, should any question or doubt of its identity be at any time raised.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

To be accustomed to live a life of moderation
Is best; may it be my lot to grow old,
If not in grandeur, yet at least in calm security.
For in the first place to pronounce the name
Of moderation is persuasive, and to practise it
Is by far the greatest advantage to mankind.
But over-abundant prosperity avails at no fit time for mortals,
And greater woes incurred by the anger of God
And inflicted against their homes, pay it back in the end.
EURIPIDES.

It was late and almost dark when they reached the entrance into Glenfinlan, but Father Murphy was anxious to learn from the Widow O'More some further particulars of the unfortunate Michael Hennessy. Therefore he dismissed the men with a kindly shake of his hand, and said, "It's little more than a blessin' for the trouble ye have taken that I can give ye."

"Is it throuble at all we'd call it now, yer riverence? Sure, then, isn't it the greatest pleasure in life? And wouldn't we walk with our bare feet all round the big

world to sarve ye? And so would every mother's sowl in Carrigtown; for isn't it the blessins ye give us—and don't yer riverence taach us the hopes and the prayers that carries us through the long days and wintry nights, when maybe there's not a bit nor a sup, let alone a sod o' turf, to give either light or haat in our cabins?"

"Well, well, good night, and may we all meet where there will be no more night, and where all our burdens will be lifted from our shoulders by the Lord, who died for us all—bless His holy name—and where we shall be in the company of the blessed Saint Patrick and all holy angels, and sing praises to God for ever and ever."

Father Murphy found the Widow O'More waiting for him, with a good turf fire, which lighted up her cabin, and the praties just ready, as she said, "to rowl out on the table; for 'tis weary his riverence must be. Take the pony up to the shed," she said to the barefooted girl, "and keep a look out—use your eyes and your ears, and don't fall asleep upon the hay, mind me, now; and if you hear or see anything stirring, come and knock three times at the door. There, get along with you," she

added, as she pushed the sleepy-looking girl out, and fastened the door after her.

"This is a bad business," said Father Murphy, with a grave and severe look; "and now you must tell me the exact truth—everything ye know concerning it."

"Sure and is it decaving yer riverence I'd be after?"

"Well, then, answer my questions in a straightforward manner. In the first place, who saw the deed done?"

"Sure and 'twas Connor himself, with his own two eyes."

"And how came he there?"

"'Twas with his Uncle Michael, rest his soul, that the lad was walking. He's been staying with him and the rest of the boys up in the Galteemore—a plague on 'em."

"Ah, I always cautioned you not to let the lad go off with his uncle among that bad lot. 'Tis mischief they're always hatching up there among the potheen stills, and treason and murther they're after, and all that brings discredit on our holy Church in this luckless counthry. Ye are a bad lot, ye O'Mores and Hennessys, every mother's sowl of ye."

"It's not for me to say that yer riverence

does not spake the truth about us all, but what is a lone widdy to do with a wild gossoon of a lad, that is left with no father or mother?"

"Well, then, the boy said it was the O'Neil murdered the man Michael Hennessy—was that it?"

"More's the pity, it was that same; but 'twas quarrelling they were, and Michael lifted his hand against the O'Neil. 'Twas all about some plague of a Will, that Michael said Nelly gave him—a bit paper like—that would give all the old Mr. Roland O'Neil's property to somebody else. The O'Neil said 'twas false; and wid that Michael went on to say that he know'd more than that. He said, says he, if he and some other person chose to spake the word, the boy Roland, the O'Neil's own son, would never inherit a rood o' land of the De Lacy territory."

"What could he mane by that?"

"It's not for the likes o' me to know. Howsomedever, I believe there is one that knows more than—and could tell if—if——"

"If what? Ye're not telling me the exact truth now. Who is it that knows?"

"May the Lord forgive me, I can't tell—it's a poor sinful woman I am."

"That's true for ye, now; but ye must answer me plainly. Did any one see that foul deed done besides the boy Connor, and how was it he came here to tell you, and then run away again, as you told me he did, before I went to the fairies' glen?"

"'Twas frightened he was, poor lad, and no wonder, when he saw the old uncle kilt entirely, and laid under the black stone."

"If he was so frightened, I wonder he came all the way here to tell you of it, when it's just the contrary way from his haunts in the Galteemore. Besides, how was it the chap would think of telling ye to send for me? It's noways likely that such a wild spalspeen as yer grandson Connor would care so much for his uncle's soul, that he should come all this way for the sole purpose of telling ye to send for me to give him Christian burial? Somebody else must have been there to see it, and told you, if it was done as ye say."

Mrs. O'More scratched her head, rocked herself to and fro on her chair for a minute, and did not seem to know well what to answer, or rather what question to put, for

the usual Irish mode of answering is to ask another question.

"Hasn't the boy then sense in his head?" she said at last; "and isn't he his father's own son—the O'Neil's—who makes the speeches, and gets the votes in the House o' Lords in the newspapers, and wasn't it likely he'd think, Sure Father Murphy's the man to go and bury the corpse, and say a prayer dacint over him? And haven't I always taught him to respect yer riverence above every one, and to honour and obey you in all things, and——"

"I think it's lying ye are, now," said Father Murphy.

"May the Lord forgive me if I go agin yer riverence; but have patience with me, and I'll make a clane breast of it the next time I see ye."

Father Murphy saw that nothing more could be extracted from her at present: he was well experienced in the difficulty of getting the exact truth from the bad lot to whom the Widow O'More belonged—a set of those Ribbonmen, or Whiteboys, or Peep-o'-Day boys—those strange and almost mysterious outlaws, that have so long perplexed the government of Ireland. He felt con-

vinced that the Widow O'More had not told him the whole truth, and, therefore, he did not put much faith in her assertion that Mr. O'Neil had murdered her brother-in-law. It appeared to him very possible that the accusation might be purposely made out of spite against Morgan, to gratify those feelings of revenge which had often led to such dreadful outrages in poor troubled Ireland. That Michael Hennessy might have received a death-blow in some quarrel with his own lawless companions was very probable, and as it possibly happened not far from Eyrie Lodge, they may have sought to lay the guilt of the deed upon the O'Neil.

All these vague surmises tended to confirm the good father in his intention of saying nothing about the matter to any one. However, he made one more attempt to elicit something.

"Then I have done now all ye wanted of me, and ye don't want to bring the accusation against the O'Neil to the court of justice?"

"The Lord defend me from it; sure and would ye want to bring the lad up to accuse his own father?"

"Certainly not, if other proof of his guilt could be obtained ; but if ye know of any one else who saw it, and will not give evidence, then we all become guilty of concealing the deed, and in the eye of the law we should be considered as abettors of the murder."

"The Lord save us ! how can that be ? wouldn't it be giving up another man—bringing another fellow-creature to the gallows, if we informed against him ? Sure we'd be more guilty of his murder than if we concealed it ?"

Father Murphy knew well that it was useless to reason with the widow when she was resolved not to understand. So he took leave of her, and rode down the dark narrow glen to his own solitary home in the village.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I maintain that thou oughtst not to drive away
The hopes of good. Since he who reigns supreme,
The son of Saturn, hath not allotted all things to mortals
Devoid of pain. But misery and delight, or sorrow and joy,
Come in turn to every one, like the revolving paths of the arctic
bear.

Nor does the spangled night remain to mortals,
Nor the fates, nor riches, but in a moment they are gone.
And to the same mortal succeeds joy and the loss of joy.

SOPHOCLES.

To revert to Morgan's illness. The day after their arrival at Kiloran, he had been seized with a low fever, which the doctor said had been brought on by exposure to damp. He was too ill to travel for several weeks, but he expressed extreme anxiety to reach London, saying he had important business which rendered his presence necessary there. When the doctor perceived this anxiety to start, he reluctantly gave his consent, and they arrived, after travelling by slow stages, at De Lacy House in London, without any relapse of illness taking place.

But as time passed on, Morgan appeared to be much altered. He became subject to fits of depression which Nesta had never observed before.

At times he evinced more gratitude for her affection; and at others he was irritable and captious, giving way to violent fits of anger. Yet, on the whole, Nesta felt that she was of more use to him now; that he valued her attention much more than previously; and this enabled her to endure with cheerful hope the fits of anger or ill temper that often were very hard to bear. She now began to believe that Aunt Mary was right, that her husband would love her at last; that her patience and forbearance would be rewarded.

One day she happened to ask whether he would like to go back to Ireland? He replied, in a tone of deep despondency, "There seems to be a spell against us in that country." Nesta had often thought this, and could not help sometimes imagining that it was because he had been so unjust towards his own brother. Therefore she willingly seized on the opportunity to remark on the different events which had occurred at all their Irish residences.

"At Carrigroghan my child was murdered; Dermot Castle was scarcely finished when that woman appeared; then at Eyrie Lodge there was your fall, which seemed to bring on an illness; then that dangerous fever at Kiloran."

"Yes, there seems to be a curse hanging over it all; yet, how foolish to think so; such folly, when I am all the while convinced it is chance."

"I would give all we possess in this world," said Nesta, "if you had but faith—if you could acquire a real belief—then you would have peace."

"Peace—I hate peace!" he said, bitterly; "I hate rest. Stirring, stirring life—exciting, rapturous enjoyment is what I want."

"But, perhaps, some day you may be tired of that constant excitement—this wild seeking for distraction. Then you will seek in vain for rest, for you will not have laid the foundation—there will be nothing to rest upon."

"No. I suppose the marble walls and palaces I built on rocks will be of no use. I may call to the rocks to cover me, or beg to be swallowed in the waves, like poor, poor

Nelly," he half muttered to himself, "and the stones, the black stones—Ha! it is horrible——"

* * * * *

It was not often, however, that Nesta had any opportunity of talking to Morgan at all; for whenever they were at Knutsford Hall, he liked to have the house full of company; and charades, theatricals, and balls succeeded each other in the evenings after days passed in shooting or hunting. Soon after his recovery, he received intelligence of the death of the Earl of Galtinglass. The old man only survived his last son, Lord Ardfinnan, a few months, and, by his decease, Morgan O'Neil succeeded to the barony of Ardfinnan.

This event, which gave him a seat in the House of Lords, seemed at first a source of gratification; but Nesta observed, during the following session, that the change did not appear to answer his expectation.

He several times complained to her with much bitterness, that his case was like that of the great Lord Chatham—that the House of Lords would prove to be the grave of his power and influence. He felt that his talents were of the kind—his speeches were more

calculated, to produce effect in the Lower House than in the Upper, and he felt the latter to be a much more critical and formidable audience. Thus the honours he had so long coveted were the cause of the greatest disappointment. To feel that he had less influence than formerly—to be aware of the diminution of his power, was a bitter trial to one of Morgan's temperament, and it had a bad effect on his temper and spirits.

And so the months and years passed on with very little variation in the even tenor of Nesta's existence, till Roland entered his twentieth year.

CHAPTER XXX.

Having learnt most probably my sufferings
Thou art come ; but how my heart is breaking
Thou canst not fully know by experience, for thou dost not feel the
same woe.

For youth is pastured in such vales of its own,
And neither does the summer heat of Heaven
Nor showers nor any gale, disturb it.
But as it elevates with pleasure a life of ease
For itself, until one be called a wife instead of a virgin,
And receive her share of anxiety in the hours of the night,
Fearing either for her husband or her children.

SOPHOCLES.

DURING all this time Nesta had never seen little Letitia. A coolness seemed to have sprung up between Morgan and Honoria at last, so Nesta fancied, although Honoria came to the fêtes she gave at De Lacy House, and was apparently glad to meet her.

Of course Nesta had inquired about the little Letitia, and Honoria had expressed her gratitude for the kindness she had shown in saving her child's life, and nursing her in her subsequent illness. But it seemed that the child was always left in the country,

either in Scotland or Ireland; and Morgan had never expressed any wish to go to Ireland since the illness he had after the summer they spent at Eyrie Lodge.

Honorina appeared to be in no hurry to bring out her daughter. Not until the season before the fêtes were to be given for Roland's coming of age, was Lady Letitia Glenmaurice to be presented.

Many people attributed this to Lady Glenmaurice's disinclination to acknowledge that she had a daughter of an age to present—while others, (perhaps?) more good natured, said that it was because the girl was plain.

Few were prepared to see a young creature whose loveliness caused quite a sensation at the first drawing-room. Graceful, self-possessed, without either shyness or effrontery, was she; but very unlike most other girls in every respect, for she had had strange and counteracting influences at work in the progress of her mental and bodily development. Unloved, and uncared for by her own mother—subjected too frequently to the boisterous ill humour of her wild brothers, she looked back to the recollection of Nesta, as to a guiding star. In her mind and heart all happy impressions dated

from that summer when Nesta laid the foundation of the religious feelings, which had produced the only real enjoyment she had experienced in her lonely existence.

She had longed for this day of presentation; but with very different feelings than those usually experienced, on similar occasions, by *débutantes* in the world of fashion. She regarded with an indifference that hurt the pride of her maid, and excited the contemptuous surprise of her governess, the costly preparations for her court attire, and yet her heart beat with anxious expectation as she stepped into the carriage, and the all-absorbing thought in her mind was the question—Shall I see her? Will she be there? Will she know me?

And then her heart sank as she repeated, "She *may* have forgotten me. She must have forgotten me, after so many years."

"Don't look so stupid and solemn, Letitia," said her mother, as they alighted at St. James's. "You look as if you did not see or hear anything that is going on."

Letitia felt that this was very true, and she aroused herself to take notice of the remarkable people they met, and of the beautiful scenes they were passing through.

"I congratulate you," said Lady Teviot,

as they were detained by the crowd in one of the doorways near her for some minutes. "How well you have contrived a regular foil for your own charms. Her fair skin and golden hair form such an enchanting contrast to your own dark beauty. Why have you kept her back these last two years?"

Long before they reached the presence-chamber, Letitia could not avoid perceiving the effect produced by her own beauty.

"Strange," she thought, "for I was not a very pretty child; at least my nurse and governess never called me so, no one did but Roland, and if I have become a beauty now she will never recognise me." After leaving the presence-chamber they were squeezed in a doorway for some minutes. Letitia was immediately behind her mother, and could not see anything. But a voice reached her ear that made her tremble with delighted expectation—one she had thought of unceasingly—a sound that was connected with all that was loveliest and happiest in the world. Then she heard her mother say, "Oh, Lady Ardfinnan, is that your beautiful lace lappet that has hitched in my bracelet—I am so sorry—but I fully expect to have all my things torn off my back."

Nesta had been speaking to another lady. —

and had not perceived Lady Glenmaurice, as her back was turned towards her. But now she turned round so quickly that her lappet was completely torn by the inextricable bracelet.

"Stay, what are you doing; you will break my bracelet if you move so hastily."

"I beg your pardon, Lady Glenmaurice," said Nesta, looking eagerly round at the fair head which she saw behind Lady Glenmaurice's dark tresses. "That is your daughter, is it not? I hoped I should find you here to-day." She took the hand of the trembling girl within both her own, and pressed it with a warmth that brought the colour into Letitia's cheeks, and made her still shy blue eyes dance and glisten with joy. Yet she could find no words to utter what she felt, or rather she shrank from expressing it before her mother, and therefore said nothing.

But Nesta felt that her looks expressed all she wished to find. The stamp of purity was on that brow; kindness and humility were depicted on the lovely face; that graceful dignity which springs from habitual faith in religion was in her form and movements; the repose of power was stamped on the

calm broad forehead. Deep affection, mingled with resignation to suffering, was expressed in the beautiful smile of her well-formed mouth.

All this Nesta saw and read so plainly that there was no need of words to define it.

Letitia, too, saw that Lady Ardfinnan regarded her with even more affection than she had ever allowed herself to expect, and she was certain that henceforth she should have a real friend. All that jarred against her in her mother and brothers, and the society which frequented their house, was forgotten in the delight of finding that her remembrance of Nesta was no delusion—that what she had sometimes thought was a dream, was now realised—that the embodiment of all that is good and lovely did really exist—such were the thoughts which transformed the scene around her into one of enchantment, and made her feel as if she were treading on air.

CHAPTER XXXI.

For with friends it is delightful to rejoice well,
But (may it not befall) if occurrences bring evils,
It is sweet to look into the eyes of a kindly-disposed man.
EURIPIDES.

"MILADI is not at all fatigued with the court to-day," said Florentine, as she took off Nesta's dress that afternoon. "She looks fresher than when she departed for it this morning; but miladi's dress has suffered—it is certainly not at all fresh now. It has encountered a great deal in the wars, and this point lace too, all to small piece—all to rags—quel dommage, and the berthe too; yet miladi looks as pleased as if she had received some great good fortune."

"Yes, I am pleased; I don't know when I have felt so happy, for I have seen Lady Letitia Glenmaurice, and I am convinced she is one of the most charming girls I have met with. You remember that beautiful

little girl who met with the accident, and that Roland said——”

“Ah, miladi has seen Lady Letitia Glenmaurice,” said Florentine, who appeared to have derived anything but pleasure from the intelligence, as it seemed to Nesta, when she saw her face over her own in the glass. In fact, her maid’s countenance assumed that startled and bewildered look which she had sometimes discovered on it whenever their sudden departure from Eyrie Lodge was mentioned. But now, when she questioned her about it, she was, as before, unable to elicit any reason for her fears.

The fame of the fair Letitia’s successful introduction to the fashionable world reached Roland’s ears at Oxford. Two of his friends had seen her at parties and at the Opera, and declared that she was the loveliest creature they had ever beheld.

Roland determined to seize upon the first opportunity of going to London, for, although the impression she had made in childhood was not so strong, owing to the many distractions and temptations by which the heir to such a princely fortune is assailed with on all sides, yet his curiosity was great to see her, and some of the old

romantic feeling revived when he heard the glowing description his friends gave of her charms.

So he arrived at De Lacy House one Saturday afternoon, and told his mother that he must see Letitia. "Will she be at the Opera to-night?" he said; "or where or how can I ensure a sight of her before I return to Oxford?"

Nesta had met Letitia several times since that presentation day, but as they both seemed to feel or imagine that Lady Glenmaurice did not appear pleased when they were talking with each other, a feeling of restraint had sprung up, which effectually impeded any expression of the delight they both experienced at meeting again.

"She is very likely to be at the Opera to-night," said Nesta, in answer to her son's impetuous inquiry; "and if so, you can see her, for Lady Glenmaurice has a box just opposite to ours."

"But don't you see a great deal of her? Don't you meet incessantly, and was she not enchanted to meet you again after all these long years—and didn't she ask about me?"

"There has scarcely been any oppor-

tunity to allow her to inquire about you, for we only meet at crowded parties."

"But why, then, does she never come and pass the mornings with you? Really, you are so cold and indifferent about her it quite provokes me."

"I am quite the reverse," said Nesta; "I would give anything to have her with me, as she was during that happy time at Eyrie Lodge. But you, perhaps, never heard that her mother behaved very heartlessly to your father before we married. They were almost engaged, and she deceived him."

"But they made it up. I have heard that they were very good friends after that," said he.

"Yes, they were," said Nesta; "but of late they seldom meet, and I fancy there is some coolness between them. So, I suppose, she does not wish that her daughter should be intimate with me."

"She shall, though, I'm determined. You'll come to the Opera now, won't you?"

"Yes, that I will, as you are going, otherwise I had not intended to do so."

"Well, tell me what o'clock it is. Ah,

there is only just time to dress and have some dinner. Does my father dine at home?"

"I believe not; so we will have it a little earlier, if you like, that we may be in good time."

They arrived before the curtain was raised, so that most of the boxes were empty.

"I'll go and stand in the crush-room," said Roland, when his mother had taken her seat in the box. "I will look for her as she passes, and see if she recognises me."

"That will be impossible, I should think," said Nesta, as she gazed with a smile on the tall, handsome young man, and remembered what a difference those twelve years had made in his appearance.

"Well, no matter. I'll introduce myself."

He went off, and took up a position near the door, where he could most distinctly see every one who came through the room, and he looked so particularly at all the young ladies with fair hair and blue eyes, that many thought they had made a conquest of him.

"Who is that?" said Lady Teviot to her daughter, as they passed by. "Who is

that young man who looked at you so rudely? His face puts me in mind of some one, but I don't think we know him."

"No," said her daughter, "we do not; but he is so like Lord Ardfinnan, that I almost think it must be his son, whom we heard so much of from Charlie."

"Very likely. I'll ask Lady Ardfinnan, and we will send him an invitation to dinner. But what is he standing there for?" she said, as, on looking back when they had got into the passage, they saw him still standing on the same spot.

The first act was over; yet still Roland could see no one who at all answered the description he had heard of Letitia; therefore, fancying she might have passed without his perceiving her, he went back to his mother's box. But Lady Glenmaurice's was still empty.

Some men came into Lady Ardfinnan's box and talked to her; and amongst others, her old friend Mr. Praid, who expressed much pleasure at finding Roland there.

"So you got away from Oxford for the sake of the Opera; well, it's worth hearing, indeed, when Grisi sings."

"I don't much care for Grisi's singing,"

said Roland, "but I want to see the beauty."

"What, Lady Letitia Glenmaurice? Haven't you seen her yet? There, there, just coming into the box opposite," he said, directing his glass.

"Yes, there she is indeed; the same lovely expression, the same——"

Roland said no more, but his countenance changed visibly; its expression became more calm, although far more animated. Some spark of enthusiasm had been kindled where excitable weariness had prevailed before.

"Well, my boy," said Mr. Praid, who had been watching him with great interest.

"Does she come up to your expectation?"

"Yes; but——"

"But what?" he inquired, as he looked full into Roland's countenance, and with the experience of many years' knowledge of human nature, read something of the thoughts and feelings that were rising up in the young man's heart. It was a sight the old man loved to witness. "God bless the boy!" he said to himself, while the tears came into his eyes; "and may he be preserved by a true love from all the fearful temptation that

will beset his path. Would you like to come with me to their box?" he said, after a few minutes, during which no one spoke.

"Yes—no—yes—I—don't——"

"You don't feel that you are half worthy to approach that fair young creature; was not that it, my boy? All the better, and it's quite true—quite true; for you are a wild good-for-nothing scamp; you have already half drained the cup of vice, but, thank God, you have still sense enough left to be aware of your unworthiness, and how immeasurably beneath that pure girl you are. Come along; if I didn't see all that in your face, I would not introduce you to her."

"But she is an old friend of mine, and, perhaps, would remember me."

"Yes, I know all. I have heard your mother relate that adventure on the mountain in Ireland, when you were the means of saving the child's life. Come along."

"Shall I venture?" he inquired, in a low voice, of his mother; for he instinctively turned to her at this moment, which he felt to be the most important crisis of his life.

"Yes, for you will probably often meet her; therefore, Mr. Praid may as well introduce you now," said Nesta, who felt a

sort of mingled anxiety and pleasure which made her tremble, yet she scarcely knew why.

Nesta smiled as she saw them enter the opposite box, yet the tears were in her eyes ; and she inwardly prayed that her son's true love might prosper.

As she looked through the glass, she saw a frown on Honoria's face, which did not presage well for her son's reception ; and Letitia's shy eyes were directed down towards her fan ; but Nesta fancied she saw a glow of happiness which seemed to cast a sort of halo over her beauty.

Then she saw Letitia take up the glass and direct it towards herself ; and it remained there so long, that Honoria touched her arm, and told her to attend to the stage. Then Letitia seemed to be listening to the music ; she was not talking to Roland ; but when not attending to the stage, seemed to have no eyes or ears for anybody but his mother ; her eyes were constantly directed towards Nesta's box.

"Perhaps she will not love him," thought Nesta, with a sigh. "There may already be some one else she cares for. Yet I cannot help wishing for it ; I am so dreadfully anxious about him ; and perhaps her influence might direct him right."

Roland remained in Lady Glenmaurice's box; after a time, Mr. Praid left him and returned to Nesta's.

"Well, what do you think?" she inquired, as soon as some other men had left her box, and they were alone.

"I scarcely know; I think that she is completely under her mother's influence; and perhaps that unfathomable Honoria may have some other project. Yet, it seems strange, for there is no such *parti* at this moment now as your son; therefore, I cannot see what her objection could be—if she has any."

"Prejudice, or hatred, perhaps," said Nesta; "I thought she did not look pleased when he went into the box."

"It would be most perverse if she tries to impede this; for the boy is really well enough, considering the temptations which beset his path; and this admiration might bring out his best feelings. If it can but end well, this very opposition from her mother will make him more anxious to succeed; for, really, there is something unexpectedly piquant in the heir of eighty thousand a year meeting with frowns from the young lady's mother."

CHAPTER XXXII.

I would rather fail, or fall into misfortune
By doing good, than succeed by doing evil.

SOPHOCLER.

HENRY O'NEIL and Eva still continued to live in the same little house in the dark street where their eldest son was born ; for Henry had not met with any signal success in his late-adopted profession. But he was able to make enough to pay for his son's education at the university, which had been his chief object, and to maintain his family in some degree of comfort. They had four children, after an interval of some years, therefore the eldest son, Edwin, was aware that his father could only pay for his education by extreme economy, and he resolutely abstained from incurring any expenses, or being enticed into any of those extravagances, which seem to be almost necessary

to the well (or ill?) being of most young men.

After he had been at Oxford about a year and a half, his cousin, Roland O'Neil, arrived. He did not belong to the same college, but they often met, for although Henry had never once entered his brother's house, and of late years they had not many opportunities of seeing each other, yet the recollections of early childhood, and the affection Roland felt for his mother's friend, Eva, made him look, at first, with kindly interest on his cousin.

They often met, but their habits and tastes were so different, that they did not become intimate; and perhaps the wild young heir, who had never studied with sufficient perseverance to acquire much knowledge, was rather jealous of Edwin's great and varied acquirements, and in time he began to look upon his cousin with the same kind of dread that had been inspired in him at school by the head master.

He saw that Edwin did not approve of many things which Roland had accustomed himself to regard as necessary acts, or such as ought to be excused in a person who was heir to such immense wealth.

By the time Lady Letitia's fame reached him, Roland had fallen into such a different set, that he very seldom met the industrious cousin, who was now reading for honours.

Roland, too, was studying for the Little Go, and his friends predicted that, as he was said to have fallen in love with the reigning beauty, he would certainly be plucked. He went often to London; but in other respects his love seemed to have a different effect, for he became much more studious, and was seldom seen among the wild set, whose chief aim it seemed to derive as much harm and as little learning as it was possible to extract from the old college.

Edwin was very glad to see the change, but he was ignorant of the cause, for Roland never mentioned Letitia's name to any one but his mother. He shrank from any allusion to her; and if his boisterous friends, who had first drawn his attention towards her by expressing their admiration, mentioned her name and spoke jestingly of his love, it seemed to him worse than sacrilege.

Edwin O'Neil had considerable abilities, and as he wished to spare his father as much expense as possible, he endeavoured

to turn his poetical and literary talents to account.

Some of his attempts were successful, but his university studies did not allow him to compose more than a few papers for the magazines.

These writings had attracted Aunt Mary's attention before she knew who the author was—not so much for any beauty of language or versification, as because the tone, the religious feeling displayed in them, was particularly just and true. She was able to discover through her publisher who the author was, although the young man had concealed it even from his own parents. After the publication of a little volume of poems, that appeared in the month of May, she sent the following letter to Eva :

“I congratulate you, dear Eva, and your son. I like a book that makes us feel happy, or, at least, in harmony with the tendencies of creation. It is both strange and humiliating to find that the writings of the ancients did this more than those of the present day. The ancient Greek poets and philosophers seemed at any rate to seek for harmony, to endeavour to fathom and reconcile the enigma of creation, while many

modern writers (except Shakspeare, Schiller, Richter, &c.) not only bring every inharmonious anomaly before our eyes, but seem scarcely themselves to be aware of their hideous deformity! Yet we nominal Christians ought to be able to see more plainly than they into the motives and ends of our being; we ought to be able to feel that all tends to harmony, peace, and happiness, if we act in conformity to it.

“Shakspeare does this: he is the most Christian writer of this country. But what shall we say of much of the fiction—and, indeed, of other kinds of literature the present century has produced—in France, England, and Germany? Who can be made happier, or more in harmony with creation, by its perusal?

“When I am reading, the author’s mind interests me more than any or all the characters, real or fictitious, described in the book. The author is most conspicuous in Greek tragedies. Euripides looks all round, as well as far down into the hearts of all his characters. He is always the master-spirit that helps them to disclose to *themselves*, as well as to the reader, the hidden motives that prompt their actions and

thoughts. There is so much less self-deception—so much less wilful blindness to the broad principles of right or wrong in those poor (*benighted?*) ancients than we moderns have degenerated into, the farther we become removed from the humble-acknowledgment-of-sin-spirit which kept alive *true* knowledge* in what we call the dark middle ages. In those ages when the old-world spirit of acquired civilisation and discovery had been overcome by barbarian hordes—amid the almost total extinguishment of letters—still the true faith or knowledge inculcated by Christianity held forth its reviving influence, and the religious monuments of those times now form the models for our own.

“The poetry expressed in the cathedrals, the sculpture, and paintings of those ages, have even now a much more soothing and elevating power on thinking and heavenwards disposed minds, than all the books that have been published by the printing-press.

“Shakspeare was not far removed from the humble habits of confession of sin that

* The true knowledge explained by Socrates—the knowledge most worth acquiring—

Know thyself.

existed before the Reformation, and it takes a long time to change the character of an age. The true spirit of Catholicism—the looking for, and up to, something better than ourselves, the faith in all that is good—survived even after we had assumed the arrogant name of Protestants: a name which, in each successive century, becomes more and more the expression of a protest against religious faith of all kinds. We are, certainly, indebted to the much-condemned and ‘protested against’ confessionals of Catholicism for the self-knowledge, and consequent deep insight into human nature, which imparts the greatest charm to Shakespeare’s works; for, as I said before, it takes a long time to change the direction of a nation’s thought.

“Interesting fictions seem in a considerable degree to be the creation of modern days, and the intenseness of their interest appears to increase every year. Scott and a few writers of his day were almost the first who began to write *long* stories where the interest was *carefully* sustained throughout three volumes. Would our forefathers have had patience to wait and enjoy this kind of harrowing suspense for three vo-

lumes, or was it that they did not require that kind of patient excitement? for it must be in some measure *patience* which enables people to find pleasure in the perusal of a book where the interest *mainly* depends on the intricacies of a skilfully involved plot. I mean such stories as many of the most successful novels of the present day describe. Books which seem to be composed entirely of story, for if any of the characters described are interesting in themselves, yet there is scarcely one that we should care to know.

“ Their qualities are not developed by circumstances as we witness in real life, nor do the characteristic features of their disposition form or create the adventures of their career, as we see them do in those of real persons.

“ These facts do not detract from the merits of a fiction; but only show how great the power of creating interesting stories must be now, when tales can rivet our attention, and excite a most painful curiosity, without making us care about the persons or puppets that are set in motion. Our gaze is fascinated, our attention chained down, on persons who, in

any other position except that chosen by the skilful author, we should never care to hear of again. In my own case, the pleasure which painfully excited curiosity ought, I suppose, to produce, is marred by the sensation which haunts me all through the volumes, that this author could not really have enjoyed the process of composing them.

“A high standard is more easily tolerated by the world in poetry than in prose, therefore the noble tendencies of Edwin’s mind can have freer scope, and he will meet with less contempt and opposition, than if he had selected any other medium for expressing his thoughts. In popular fictions those generally are the widest spread, and those meet with the most immediate success, which appeal the most to the sympathies and comprehension of the million. I say generally, for exceptions may be pointed out to prove this as well as every other rule. As to myself, I do not care for, and therefore I have not described in my books, common-place characters, that are merely jogging down the common road to destruction. I hate all downward tendencies: I hate the little blunders which are caused by

stupidity, pride, bad feeling, or vulgarity of mind. I hate the disposition which can laugh at them, self-complacently, and find amusement in them, as they would equally in the sight of drunkenness or any other vice. I like the poetry of life and character, and have only pleasure in looking on what is good and beautiful—on whatever has an upward or happy-making tendency.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Happy are those who with discretion
Have loved, and with modest wisdom have
Rejoiced in the smiles of the goddess Aphrodite.
Choosing rather peaceful content
Than to be led astray by maddening passion, for truly
The shafts which golden-haired Love darts
From his bow of graces are twofold,
The one a destiny of ever-enduring happiness,
The other a trouble which destroys life.
May I then avert from myself,
Most beautiful Venus, the fatal shaft ;
But with just discretion may I rejoice
In love and in holy desires,
And from Aphrodite's gifts reject all unseemly passion.
But different are the natures of mortals,
And divers are ways of life, but what is really right
Is a good which is certain and lasts for ever.
And the education which instructs men well
Conduces greatly to virtue.
Indeed to feel reverence is wisdom,
And it possesses the peculiar advantage
To perceive by the mind what is just,
And to discern the true honour which gives
A glory to our lives that never grows old.

EURIPIDES.

THE more Nesta saw of Letitia the more anxious she became that her son's romantic attachment should prosper ; and yet each time they met she experienced greater misgivings, that the course of his love would

not run smooth. Why, she could scarcely tell, for Letitia evinced as much delight at seeing her and Roland as she could venture to show while Honoria's flashing expressive eyes were threatening her with their forbidding commands.

But Nesta thought that the young girl was too self-possessed—she did not show that kind of troubled trembling delight at his approach which poor Nesta, who had become a deep reader of the human heart, wished to find.

She wrote to Aunt Mary, and endeavoured to express all the hopes and fears she felt, and begged her to come and assist her in understanding the state of affairs, and, if possible, in forwarding a match which must be so greatly conducive to her son's happiness. In fact, the success of this plan seemed to Nesta almost necessary to the development of all that was good and noble in his nature.

One Saturday afternoon, when Roland came up to attend the Opera, he found his mother just going to an amateur music party at Lady Dumbleton's, and Letitia had promised to take a part in the chorus they wished to have.

They arrived early at Lady Dumbleton's, and the music had not yet begun ; Roland saw at a glance that Letitia was not in the room.

Lady Dumbleton, who perhaps had been able to discover the young man's secret wishes, said to Nesta, " You should show your son the pictures in the farther gallery before our little concert begins. My young friend, Lady Letitia Glenmaurice (whose mother is ill, and so she is here to-day under my wing), is gone with Mr. Praid to look at the Vandykes."

They were not long in availing themselves of the intelligence, and Roland triumphed in the expectation of being able to talk to Letitia without being watched by her imperious mother.

Nesta went with him as far as the saloon that opened into the picture-gallery, and then returned to Lady Dumbleton. He did not find Letitia there ; but he fancied he heard her voice in a room beyond. He hastened through the long gallery without looking at any of the splendid pictures on either side, and softly approached the door, for he wished to hear what she was saying before he presented himself to her.

"And do you really know who those beautiful lines are written by? Oh, what would I give to be acquainted with the author!"

"I not only know who it is, but I have had the privilege of meeting him; and, indeed, he is nearly related to some of your friends."

"Ah! who? Do tell me his name—and is he anything like his book in appearance—anything like his description here of King Alfred?"

Roland could see her profile as she showed the passage to Mr. Praid, and the demon of jealousy took possession of him, for he had never seen such an expression of admiration, such a glow of enthusiasm, on that face before. It was not for him to inspire such feelings of mingled veneration and enthusiasm as he saw depicted there. "And if she cared for me she would be aware of my presence—she would feel that I was looking at her!" Then, as if to shatter the horrible spell that seemed to remove her farther than ever from him, he went up to the table, and stood before her.

She started at his sudden appearance, and a change came over her countenance;

but she held out her hand with the same expression of pleasure that she always showed when they met.

He, perhaps unconsciously, drew back his hand, and his pale face and quivering lip disclosed, at least to Mr. Praid, some of the jealous feelings that were working in his mind.

Letitia perceived that something was wrong, but she had never penetrated his secret. It had never occurred to her that he paid her more particular attention than she was accustomed to meet with from most young men she met. But now it occurred to her whether anything had happened to his mother, and she anxiously inquired, "Is not Lady Ardfinnan here?"

"Oh yes; I think I heard her voice in the picture-gallery," said Mr. Praid, as he left them with that kind of decided intention to prevent their following him that often unconsciously keeps people in the place where you wish them to remain.

Mr. Praid, like many strong-minded persons who have much habit of society, had a great deal of that kind of moral influence which acts like electro-biology. I myself had an aunt who could make people sit where she chose.

Mr. Praid now considered that the best thing, under the circumstances, was that they should be forced into a tête-à-tête.

But his kind intention was not destined to be fulfilled, for Lady Teviot, who had the keenest eye for a good *parti*, scented out a possible flirtation, and hastened through the picture-gallery in order to reach the farther boudoir, where she thought it likely that proposals would be hatching. So she flounced by Mr. Praid, who in vain endeavoured to arrest her progress, and broke in upon the two.

"Ha!" said Lady Teviot, "I have found you at last;" and seizing Lady Letitia's arm, she added, "I promised Lady Glenmaurice to watch over you, and, as her greatest friend, I must be answerable for your good behaviour; and you know, my dear, it would never do to be caught in a tête-à-tête. Come, it was most fortunate for you that it was only me. Lady Dumbleton is waiting for you to begin the chorus."

Roland was too angry and annoyed to follow her, but he mechanically took up the book which had excited such enthusiastic admiration in Letitia, and tried to find the passage she had been reading.

"Have you not seen the book before?" said Mr. Praid, in a kind voice, which was so unlike the sarcastic tone in which he usually addressed the wild youth, that Roland looked up to him with surprise. "Did you not know that this poem is written by your cousin, Edwin O'Neil?"

"My cousin Edwin!" said Roland; and his handsome face was suddenly overspread with a ghastly hue, assuming a look of such hatred that Mr. Praid was pained beyond measure, and continued:

"Surely you cannot have inherited your father's hatred? You are not going to repeat the injustice done by Lord Ard-finnan to this young man's father?"

"What injustice? What do you mean? Surely you mistake. I never disliked my cousin Edwin; on the contrary, when he first came to Oxford we were the best possible friends; but—but——"

"But you fancied that he knew a great deal more than you did yourself—you saw that he avoided the society of those men who, unlike himself, had no real wish to improve—you were, perhaps unconsciously, inclined to despise him for this. I know it all. And now you are jealous because

Lady Letitia admires his poems—because you saw that her enthusiasm for whatever is beautiful and good was excited. Foolish boy! Go and tell her so—speak the plain truth to her, and tell her what an ass you are—she will forgive you, and perhaps like you all the better for your honest confession. Now, do put aside that proud look—try to dispel those angry feelings. Will you not be persuaded?” he continued, when he saw that his words failed to touch the young man’s better feelings. “That Cain-like spirit never can prosper. It did not in your father’s case. In spite of all his possessions, you well know he is not half so happy as his brother Henry in his little dark dwelling in the city. You *know* this: so beware even of the *beginning* of the same spirit. Now you are angry with me; you think that I am an impertinent old fool, and have no right to dive into your hidden feelings, and turn you inside out in this rude way. Perhaps I am, for I believe it will be of no use; yet, for your blessed mother’s sake, I wished to try and save you from your own evil feelings; for the whole world will be combined to assist in your ruin.”

“I know you mean to be kind,” said Ro-

land, who was at last touched by the old man's eagerness and the mention of his mother's name. "I am hot-tempered and foolish, I confess."

"Well, then, come with me, for here is Lady Teviot again, suspecting that we are plotting together some disloyal evasion of her sway."

When they reached the concert-room, Letitia had taken her place among the chorus-singers, and Roland could not find any means of talking to her as he wished.

Just as the party was breaking up, however, Lady Dumbleton told Letitia that she wanted to take her to Collini, the celebrated artist, on Monday morning.

"I know you delight in pictures, although your mother does not care for them, so I will call for you at eleven o'clock."

"I'll take you home now," said Lady Teviot, "for I know you are all engaged to dine with Lady Ashford, and so am I; and you will not have time to dress, and your mamma will put on her blackest looks."

So saying, she took the girl's arm and was leading her away in triumph, when Letitia said, with a quiet composure that rather disconcerted the blustering lady, as she extricated her arm,

"I must wish Lady Ardfinnan good-by, and then I will follow you down stairs."

"You will be at the Opera to-night?" inquired Nesta, as the now trembling girl wished her good-by.

"No; we are engaged to Lady Gordon's after the dinner-party; I am so sorry, for I like the Opera more than anything else."

"But you are going with Lady Dumbleton to the artist on Monday morning?"

"Oh yes, I hope so; shall you be there?" asked Letitia, with beaming eyes.

"Yes—and—yes, we shall meet there——"
Nesta was going to add, "and Roland will be with me," but stopped short, for she was not certain that the beaming look of happiness was intended for more than herself; and the poor mother felt quite jealous of her own greater influence over the young girl. But Roland continued to follow them down stairs in haste to hand her into the carriage, when he endeavoured to express by looks some small portion of what he wished to say.

"I shall see her on Monday, at all events," thought he, when he drove home, and tried to get rid of the unpleasant impression which the scene in the boudoir had left on his mind.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

With love I thrill, and overjoyed I soar aloft.

SOPHOCLES.

It happened that Edwin O'Neil came to London by a later train that same Saturday on some publishing business, and accompanied by one of his most intimate college friends, Frank Gordon.

This young man was eldest son to the Lady Gordon at whose house Letitia said they were engaged that very evening, and he persuaded his friend to promise that he would come to his mother's party.

Lady Gordon had tried many different plans to attain the much-coveted influence in the fashionable world without success, and had lately taken to literature with the same hope. That is, she collected literary lions, and, in doing so, often contrived to make her parties much more agreeable than they ever were before.

Some of the really great people who liked

to be amused came there, and Lady Teviot pronounced the opinion that, after all, Lady Gordon was a sensible woman, and was getting on. For some political reason, Morgan had forbidden Nesta to ask Lady Gordon to her parties, so that she was not invited to go to the literary *réunion* that night.

Edwin O'Neil had never been at a party in London before, for his mother never went to De Lacy House unless Nesta was quite alone. Therefore, his only introduction into what is called "good society," had been in his occasional visits during the long vacation to Lord Mowbray's place in Yorkshire.

In those days literature was a much more secure passport into the select circles of the great world than it is now ; and if a writer was so fortunate as to win praise from two or three leaders of the literary taste of the day, his position was secured.

Edwin had heard very little about the volume of his poems published that month, except from the publisher ; therefore he was totally unprepared for the sensation his appearance caused at Lady Gordon's party.

Frank Gordon had prepared his mother for his coming, and told the savants who happened to be there that evening that the

young author of "Alfred" was expected. Most of them had read and admired the poem, and although the great poet R—— said he had not, that he was too old, and had no time to read young men's verses, yet he would be glad to make his acquaintance.

There was very little jealousy among that set! How well I remember being present on an occasion very similar to that which I am describing, when a promising young author appeared for the first time—the real pleasure I saw depicted on the expressive, the speaking countenances of Sydney Smith, Lockhart, Macaulay, Rogers, and Hallam. And Lord Lansdowne!

It was at the house of the latter. All these interesting persons are now dead, the young author too; but how present the whole scene is to me—how vividly plain I see Sydney Smith's jovial broad face lighting up with a mixture of observant fun and humour, that seemed ready to seize upon the ridiculous or absurd in all he saw, yet softened into an expression of sympathy, after he had looked into the young man's face and shaken his hand.

How Lockhart's large and deep-seeing eyes beamed with admiration; how dear

old Rogers put his pale face on one side, with a gently approving nod, and in his pleasant, yet nasal voice, expressed his gratification at meeting the clever author.

And Macaulay threw his fine head back, and appeared interested in the young man, although he had begun one of his long essay-like speeches on painting just before ; while Hallam's broad forehead seemed to expand with more than its usual benignity !

And Lord Lansdowne ! Who does not remember the peculiarly deferential air, the graceful homage, which his whole person, as well as his words, seemed to express, when he was addressing those whose genius he admired ? He remained among us so much longer than the others ; he seemed to be such a permanent embodiment of all that was noble and sympathising ; his approval was such a necessary completion to success in any work, that I feel it impossible to believe that he is gone, or that a book can be benefited by any praise, unless first sanctioned by his commendation.

* * * * *

Edwin O'Neil was astonished and pleased, but I am afraid the countenances I have just described made very little impression

at that moment upon his mind, because his attention was absorbed by a pair of blue eyes, that beamed with an expression of wondering admiration which fairly bewildered him, and a voice more enchanting than any which he ever heard sounded in his ear. A beautiful girl was leaning on Mr. Praid's arm. He introduced the young poet to her with a pleased and somewhat malicious smile at the admiration he read on both their faces, and contrived to place them together at a table where some drawings were to be seen, but which were hidden from the circle of lion-hunters by a folding screen. There he left them to make each other's acquaintance undisturbed.

But their acquaintance did not require to be made. They felt as if they had always known each other. This interview seemed only a sort of natural result of all the thoughts and feelings they had each endeavoured to express; a sort of fulfilment of the dreams—the visions of their happiest moments.

Unconsciously, they had always expected this. At last they found words—they talked—and the fate of their lives was sealed before Edwin even knew who she was.

He had not heard her name when Mr. Praid introduced him, any more than the praises of his poem given by the celebrated L——.

But when her mother came up, and said it was time to return home, Letitia said to him, "You know I am well acquainted with your aunt, Lady Ardfinnan—she saved my life in Ireland, some years ago, when I fell down a precipice."

"Oh yes, I have heard of that; then is it possible you are Lady Letitia Glenmaurice?" And he suddenly became confused by the distance that was between them—perhaps an insurmountable barrier that must prevent even any intercourse! This, then, was the reigning beauty, of whose wondrous charms he had heard, who received the homage of the greatest people in London, whose life was passed in a round of gaiety and excitement, who belonged to a world which he, the penniless son of a poor barrister, could never hope to enter.

Honoria's attention had been occupied during this important half-hour by several great people in the next room, and as she never took much notice of what her daughter was doing, unless it happened

that Letitia was speaking to any persons who belonged to a set she decidedly disliked, she never even asked who "that handsome man" was until they had got into the carriage, nor did she remark the sudden change on his countenance at those few words addressed to him by Letitia which disclosed her name, and revealed to the sensitive poet the distance there was between them! Lady Glenmaurice only reproached her daughter, as they were searching for their things in the cloak-room, for her stupidity in being so long looking for their mantles. And, perhaps, with justice, for Letitia was rather absent, and did not extricate them from the confused mass as quickly as usual.

Perhaps, Edwin O'Neil may have experienced something of the same difficulty in turning his attention to the objects and persons around him, for he stood on the same spot where she had left him, meditatively turning over the leaves of the book of drawings on the table.

"Those are beautiful drawings!" said the matter-of-fact Jack Surtees, who was, perhaps, in virtue of his inoffensive mediocrity, considered to be a man of superior taste.

"Ah, they are by that promising young artist, Collini, I see. I suppose you are a great admirer of painting, Mr. O'Neil. Poetry and painting generally go together."

"What is Surtees telling you about poetry and painting?" said Mr. Praid, who had just come back into the room, and perceived Edwin O'Neil. "There is no reason why he should not, indeed, talk about both, for he knows as much as most people do about both, and thrives as well upon it. Where ignorance is bliss, it——"

"Ignorance is bliss, is it? then I must be the happiest man in London, and so I believe I am," said Lord Dumbleton, as he put his hand on Mr. Praid's shoulder. "You know I could never learn anything."

"Yes, you did learn something; you learnt to follow my advice, and that is why you are the happiest man in London."

"Very true, so I did; and that reminds me that I came here in obedience to Di's orders, for she heard at dinner to-day that the young poet, whose work she has been plaguing me about and reading passages from till I nearly fell asleep, was to be here to-night, and she begged me to be introduced, and to——"

"Here he is. Mr. Edwin O'Neil—the Marquis of Dumbleton."

"Oh dear me," said Lord Dumbleton; "but you will not think me rude, I know, Mr. O'Neil, for I really had no idea it was you, or rather that you were he, the poet, I mean. And I am no judge, so it can't signify my not liking poetry, can it? Besides, Di, my wife, raves about it, and as she is really a good judge, you will be pleased with her praise."

"I am sure he will," said Mr. Praid; "besides, I am certain he has had quite enough to-night from all these wits who are struggling about the rooms. So a little disparagement will do him good. Not that he looks elated, though," continued Mr. Praid, whose quick-sightedness discovered that some change had occurred in the young man's appearance. "A review that cuts both ways, perhaps," thought Mr. Praid, "for he looks both happier, and yet less happy. Surely the boy can't have fallen in love with her? That, with his poetry and poverty, would indeed be a misfortune."

"I suppose you are not remaining in London, Mr. O'Neil?" said Lord Dumbleton, "otherwise Di will be very glad if you will come to her Thursdays. She is getting to

like blues and wits too, which I am almost sorry for, they are generally so ugly."

"In this respect, Mr. O'Neil must be an exception," said the good-natured little Jack Surtees.

"Oh yes, I don't mean him. By-the-by, you are related to the O'Neil De Lacys—Lord Ardfinnan—I mean, are you not? Irish, too? Most people are Irish, I think."

"Ha! ha! very good," said Mr. Surtees, who, in the innocence of his heart, thought this remark of Lord Dumbleton's was intended for a joke. But the good Marquis was never guilty of such an intention, although his extreme simplicity and bonhomie sometimes produced such absurd remarks, that they sounded nearly as laughable as the bon-mots of professional wits.

"By-the-by, the artist Collini is going to paint a picture of a scene in your poem," said Mr. Praid. "I was at his studio yesterday."

"I'll—I'll introduce you to him, Mr. O'Neil," said Jack Surtees, "if you like to come with me there early on Monday morning." Edwin gladly acceded to the proposal. "Well, then, be with me at half-past ten, and we will walk to his house. It is not far off—only in Clarges-street."

CHAPTER XXXV.

All hail—oh most beautiful,
Most beautiful of all the virgins
From Olympus, Diana.
For thee this wreathed garland from the pure
Virgin mead, oh mistress, I have arranged.
From that mead where the shepherd does not even venture
To feed his flocks, nor yet has the iron plough disturbed it;
But the bee over the pure and vernal meadow ranges,
And holy reverence fertilises it with river dews.
Those only who possess that natural purity of heart
Which is not taught by art, may cull these flowers,
But for a bad man to pluck them is not lawful.

EURIPIDES.

ON what a slender thread the fate of
our lives often hangs! The mere chance
of our accepting or refusing a common in-
vitation!

Eva and Henry O'Neil had agreed to
spend that Sunday with some old friends
near Cambridge, before they heard that
Edwin had any intention of coming to
London. They had left home before he
arrived there on Saturday, and would not
return till he had started for Oxford on
Monday morning.

Eva was aware of Nesta's wishes, or rather she knew that her son loved the beautiful Letitia ; but, of course, she never talked of it, nor would she even have mentioned it to her own son, unless she had seen there was any chance of his proving a rival, or admiring the same person too much.

But, if she had been at home that Saturday night when Edwin returned from Lady Gordon's, it is very probable she might have divined some of the feelings which had been excited by the introduction to Letitia, and she would certainly have informed him of his cousin's admiration for her.

Edwin returned to the empty house in the dark street, but to him it was all bright. After the first sudden disappointment, or rather the kind of startling misgiving awakened in his mind by the discovery of her name, the blissful feelings to which her presence had given birth resumed their sway. Strong in his love, he felt that he could attain, that he must win, the position and fame requisite to be worthy of her. He felt this ; but he was too happy to think, or to fear. He could only dream on

in that delicious unconsciousness of present facts and difficulties which the dawn of love creates, and bask in the rosy atmosphere which tinged everything with its soft radiance.

In this enchanted state he passed the whole of Sunday, and it was only on Monday morning, when the work of life began once more, the dread came over him that he might never see her again. "Never? Could that be?" he thought, as he walked along the Strand on the way to Mr. Surtees's house, and as he passed towards Charing-cross, and saw Northumberland House, which reminded him of the somewhat similar mansion of the De Lacys, he contrasted the position of his cousin Roland—the heir to that princely abode—to three large fortunes—with his own, and, for a moment, a shade of regret at the great difference, at his own penniless state, crossed his mind. But it was quickly dismissed. For he, unconsciously perhaps, felt that if he could win her heart, poverty would make little difference to herself. But even if he could succeed in obtaining a competence, which is all he could expect, would her parents give their consent?

It was rather before half-past ten o'clock when he reached Mr. Surtees's house in Park-lane, and the little man was in the act of finishing his breakfast. He made Edwin come and sit down at the table and talk to him. He showed him his pictures and works of art, and then they walked out together. It was about half-past eleven when they reached the artist's house. Two carriages were waiting at the door. Edwin recognised one as his Aunt De Lacy's, and Mr. Surtees told him that the other was the Lady Dumbleton's.

"Oh! that Lady Dumbleton whose husband we met last Saturday, and who talked about his wife Di?"

"Yes, exactly; and I am so glad to think that you will meet her here!"

* * * * *

Nesta and her son had been the first to arrive at Signor Collini's, and as they had never seen him before, Nesta explained that it was Lady Dumbleton who told them that they might venture to intrude upon him.

What wonderfully good-natured people artists are! and how seldom they show any annoyance at being interrupted in their labours! At least, I have always been sur-

prised to observe this at the numerous studios I have visited in many parts of the world, although the outward approaches to those of Ary Scheffer and Rosa Bonheur were guarded by a number of the most fierce looking and sounding dogs I ever beheld. Whether these formidable animals were intended to prevent interruption, I know not; but when the danger was passed, nothing could be more gracious than the reception we met with from both those celebrated artists.

Signor Collini was no exception to the rule, and, as he was endowed with the capacity to seek as well as feel beauty in every way, he soon discovered the graceful mind which gave a lovely expression to Nesta's naturally unmarked features, and stamped with the resolute determination of a high purpose a figure and colouring which would otherwise have been deficient in character and decision.

All this he marked while he expressed the pleasure he felt at making her acquaintance, and then, turning to her son, he could not but admire his faultless features, splendid eyes, and his rich dark colouring, glowing with health and youth. But the

contemplation did not give him so much pleasure, and again he turned his beauty-seeking eyes to Nesta's pale and somewhat faded face.

"Your son does not resemble his mother," said he. "I should like miladi's face for one angel I am painting in a picture of the Nativity of our Lord. And I shall like it, too, for one picture I am doing of a beautiful poetry of King Alfred. There is my design, if you will take the trouble to look at it."

"The poem of King Alfred?" said Roland. "You do not mean the one lately published by Edwin?"

"It is by one Monsieur O—O something, I hear—I not know exactly."

"Mr. O'Neil," said Nesta; "yes, he is my husband's nephew."

"Really! Oh then, please, miladi, be so good as to make me known to him. I should like to ask him about some of the costumes, and of the characters who figure in it, and like to know himself so ver much."

"He is still at Oxford," said Nesta; "but when next he happens to be in town, I am sure he will be charmed to come, and

it will give him immense gratification to see the beautiful picture you are doing from a scene in his poem."

"Monsieur does not like the picture," said the artist, as he saw an expression of discontent and almost of anger on Roland's face while looking at the masterly sketch. "He sees faults in it, and no wonder, for Monsieur O'Neil can paint much better with his words than I can with the brush. His pictures are sublime, mine very common-place—what you call prosaic."

"I have not read the poem," said Roland, "therefore I cannot judge. I have no time for reading such kind of books, and——"

"My son is studying for his degree," interrupted his mother, as she endeavoured to screen Roland's angry looks from the wondering artist. "That is why he has yet had no time to read his cousin's poem."

"Ah! but I thought miladi said that Monsieur O'Neil, the author, was studying there too for his degree—how come he more time?"

"He has been longer at Oxford—he is a year older than my son, and, consequently, as he has learned more, he has more leisure,"

said Nesta, the tears starting to her eyes; and although she kept them resolutely back, and looked composed as usual, the quick-sighted artist was able to surmise a great deal of the secret history of her development—to read much of the anxious prayers, the earnest longings for the good and happiness of those she loved, which had imparted a halo of purity to her features.

But, with the tact of true genius, he immediately endeavoured to divert the attention of both from this drawing, and showed them some portraits he was painting.

“You will know this?” he said, pointing to a half-finished picture of Lady Dumbleton and her children.

“Oh, that is delightful!” exclaimed Nesta, as she gazed on the almost speaking group. The artist had contrived to impart to the children’s portraits the living glow of health, the sprightliness of youth and hope; and to the maturer countenances of their parents, the repose of attained happiness and peace. Nesta forgot her own anxieties and sorrows in the contemplation of this beautiful illustrative memorial of her friend’s happiness. “What excellent likenesses; you have caught

exactly the mischievous little Lady Di's arch look; and the baby and Charlie, and Lord Dumbleton himself; you have seized upon his happiest expression; one would have thought you must have seen him the very night he proposed to his 'Cousin Di,' at a ball at my house, one-and-twenty years ago!"

"Ah, so long ago as dat? His happy life keep him young, den; he look just like dat now when he is pleased, when he sit opposite to miladi, and she talk to him, for the picture. Ah, there is she now!" continued Signor Collini, as the door opened, and Lady Dumbleton came into the room with Letitia. "And oh! what beautiful young lady with her! Ah, what eyes, what grace!" he said half to himself, while Nesta and Roland were greeting them.

"Now," said Nesta to the artist, as she witnessed the enthusiastic admiration which the sight of Letitia's beauty had awakened, "now, you will have a much better model for your angels and heroines than I could have furnished."

"She ver lovely, ver perfect, and ver happy too, I think; all go right with her, I hope."

Roland was talking to her, and he made

her look at some pictures at the farther end of the room, but they had no sooner reached it than the door again opened, and Mr. Surtees and Mr. Edwin O'Neil were announced. Letitia looked round when she heard the name, the colour mounted to her cheeks, she made a step forward in the direction of the new comers, but, suddenly correcting herself, she said to Roland with a shy effort to appear composed :

"I met your cousin at Lady Gordon's on Saturday evening, and we had a long talk together. Are you not glad to see him?" she continued, as she saw with extreme surprise the ruffled expression of anger which had perplexed her so much at Dumbleton House when she was talking of the poem.

"No," he said, in a fierce whisper, "I am not glad to see him. I hate him, because I see that you—you——"

"What can you mean?" she said, trying to interrupt the torrent of angry words which, as it was becoming louder, she feared would attract the attention of the other people. "This is some mistake, I am certain;" and advancing towards Nesta, she said, "I must speak to your mother; I want to ask her something." But Roland

had seized her hand, and he held it with such a firm and almost rude grasp, that she winced with pain, and the tears came into her eyes, for the indication of temper was so plainly visible, that a whole vista of misery for Lady Ardfinnan seemed to open to her view. "Pray, pray be composed, and let me go," she added in a low voice, "for you were never like this when we were children. I am sorry you give way to such anger. What can be the reason?"

"Come into the other room, and I will tell you the reason alone," he replied, pulling her away. "You must, you shall hear me."

Nesta's anxious eyes had watched them, and discovered the state of the case, but with the quick tact of true affection, she contrived to engage the attention of the other persons on Lady Dumbleton's picture, which partly screened them from that end of the room where Roland and Letitia were standing, and she managed so well, that no one observed them but Edwin. In this effort to screen them, she was unintentionally helped by little Jack Surtees, who buzzed like a pertinacious bee round the others, and in his efforts to show off the pictures, the artist, and his own apprecia-

tion of both, so engrossed their attention, that Signor Collini was not even allowed to speak to the young poet, whose work had kindled his enthusiasm.

Nesta, however, was not able to attract Edwin's attention to the picture, and as his tall form towered above the large easel, she saw that he partly divined what was going on.

But she was not prepared for the look of misery that flitted for a moment over his handsome face, when Roland succeeded in drawing Letitia into the farther room.

"Have you met her? Do you know her?" she eagerly inquired of Edwin as she pointed towards the spot.

"Yes," he replied, with strongly assumed calmness. "I was introduced to her at Lady Gordon's; we had a long talk together."

"Look there; you must see a picture Signor Collini is doing to illustrate your poem," said Nesta, taking the young man's hand within both her own, as if in the endeavour to console him, showing him a picture which was at the end of the room farthest from the one where Roland and Letitia had gone. "Your peculiar genius must be a great source of enjoyment to you,

dear Edwin," she added; "it must, it will console you for—for any disappointment. Here, look at this illustration of your poem; think what a triumph it is at your early age to have become already so famous—to find that artists are trying to embody the creations of your pen. You have a fine career before you. I wish poor Roland had half your persevering goodness. I did not want him to have your genius—only—only——"

"I know what you mean," he said. "I hope he has read more than he is supposed to have read; some do so; they read at night. And some have a way of showing themselves more than other people," he added, with a smile, that did not fit on the present expression of his countenance. "They appear to be doing nothing, and yet they contrive to work a great deal. I hope he is doing so. The fact is, I have had the advantage of being forced to work by want of patrimony; whereas, every lazy or designing fellow finds more or less pleasure or interest in leading him into idleness. We seldom meet, but I don't hear any harm of him." He said this, because he was kindly affectioned to Nesta, and because he was strongly imbued with the old Irish disposition to wish

for the well-being of the head of the family, as such, apart from any personal regard for the individual; but he thought it with only half his mind—the remainder was wandering over the gloomy future which a hopeless attachment was marking out for him. “Tell her—tell her, if you like, that I am obliged to go back to Oxford by the next train; for I do not wish to look rude; and—Good-by.”

He looked wistfully for an instant at the farther room where Letitia had gone, then turned suddenly round and left the house, without taking leave of any of the party.

Poor fellow! He went away in a state of morbid magnanimity of mind, which he honestly mistook for a firm resolve to think no more of her.

Nesta saw it, and blessed him in her heart.

Roland made his declaration in the painter's inner studio. He expressed himself in a very excited manner. He spoke of the influence Letitia had had over him when they were children, declared that she had always retained that influence, and said that it had always kept alive his better feelings, even amid all the faults and follies which he acknowledged with that sort of reckless

candour which is often mistaken for an earnest of amendment.

She was deeply touched; painfully so on his mother's account; and she explained, with much tender consideration for his disappointment, that it would be impossible to accede to his wishes.

"I know the reason," said he, his countenance darkening. "You love my cousin. I know it is this; you need not deny it. Tell me—answer me one question, has he said so?"

"No, certainly not."

"But you think—you see—you know that he loves you. May the curse——"

"Stay! I can't listen to you any longer. Pray, pray, for your dear mother's sake, be calm. Let us go back to the other room. Do not make a scene, pray."

But he continued speaking with such vehemence that Nesta, fearing that others might overhear, hastened to interrupt a scene so distressing to Letitia, and morally bad for Roland.

Poor Letitia clung to Nesta, and hid her sobbing face in her bosom, and wished—oh! how fervently she wished—that she could do anything to gratify that dear friend. But

all seemed so dark—so dark, if the bright dream of bliss, which in its intense happiness had seemed so eternal, must be given up!

“Try to think of him with indulgence,” said Nesta, who was now quite at a loss what to think or wish.

Letitia tried to smile through her tears, and assured her that she would always do so—always feel the greatest friendship for him, and the greatest anxiety for his welfare—do anything and everything in the world for him.

She did not add, “except marry him;” but somehow or other Nesta feared that these words were on Letitia’s lips.

“Thank you—God bless you, darling,” murmured Nesta. “I know you will think kindly of him—that is all I ask now.—And here is Lady Dumbleton come, I see, to take you away. We shall meet, I hope, to-night at S. House. I shall go there on purpose to try and see you. Good-by.”

Nesta held back her son, who was preparing to follow Letitia. “Stay, do not talk to her any more at present—come with me, and I will tell you presently how nobly your cousin has acted—what a sacrifice—

"Sacrifice! I want no sacrifice—let her love the beggar, if she chooses."

"Oh, Roland, hush! That is not the way to become worthy of a great blessing."

"Well, I can't stop any longer; I must be off to Oxford now."

They went to take leave of Signor Colini, who expressed great regret when he heard that the young poet was gone. Gone! without his having an opportunity to express anything, without his having been able to ask his advice as to the costumes of his picture! Nesta endeavoured to apologise for him and explain, and promised that Edwin should call on him when next he returned to London.

"I suppose I shall never hear anything again except his praises," said Roland, as they drove away from the door. "Everybody seems to have gone mad about Edwin."

Poor Nesta found the task of reasoning with her son more difficult than anything she had ever experienced.

How strange, she thought, as she drove with him to the station that day. How perplexing it is that she could never succeed in instilling religious principles into her son, during all the years they had lived

together. And yet the very same course she had pursued with Letitia, during the two months of her childhood spent under her care, seemed to have taken such deep root. But, no doubt (she thought) the counteracting influences had been great with regard to her son; and certainly the text, "How, hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God," does apply most particularly to a young heir of immense riches, whose father has no care—no wish for his son's real eternal happiness; while every dependent, every servant—even surrounding friends—help to sow the seed of evil in his young heart.

"Mother, I shall never do any good," he said bitterly, after a pause, as they drove along.

Yet a faint hope dawned in her mind, for something in the tone of his voice, when he said "mother," told her that his evil, revengeful passions were somewhat abating.

"Yes, you will be able to do some good; you have excellent abilities; you are quite capable of taking a high degree if you choose—if you resolve and fully intend to do so, and let nothing interfere with your determination."

"No, it is impossible now; perhaps, if she had cared at all for me——"

"She does care, I know; she said she should feel great anxiety about your welfare."

"Never mind; I see by your face that you—you are quite certain that she cares most for him."

"No, really I do not. It is not fair to imagine anything of the kind. She has only seen him once, and he——"

"He thinks she does, or there would have been no necessity for his so generously, as you call it, going away without seeing her—and she looked at me with perfect indifference; and I saw her face when he appeared, and the change was as from darkness to light."

"I saw it also, for I was looking at her, dearest Roland; but it may have been nothing more than the pleasure she would naturally experience at seeing your cousin, who had written the poem she admired. This was very natural."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Thou showest hatred even while yielding, but sad
Thou wilt be when thine anger shall have passed away,
For such natures
Justly bear their own punishment in themselves.

SOPHOCLES.

It sometimes happens, as if by a sort of poetical justice, that the best-intentioned sacrifices, the superhuman efforts that we occasionally make to be unselfish, to crush the feeling which interferes with others' happiness,—that the means taken to do this in the manner we deem the most effectual, are precisely those which forward the very end we wish to prevent.

"What business have I hanging about there," thought Edwin, as he walked rapidly home. "What business—when—as if she cared for me!"

But she did care for him. He had made as decided an impression on her as she had on him, and during the entire day and two nights since they met, she had thought and

dreamed of little else. She had no idea that any particular impediment could intervene to prevent the progress of this new and enchanting affection; she could not help seeing that he admired her, consequently the feeling on her side had made as much progress as if she had known him for months.

It certainly had crossed her mind that, as a younger brother's son, he was probably poor; but she saw no further impediment in that, than probable delay or objection from her mother, who might be rather disappointed that she was not marrying some great person. But as her mother had hardly any influence over her, she would not have considered it right to sacrifice her own happiness for any ambitious fancy of that kind.

Lady Dumbleton saw that something was wrong, when she went into the inner room to seek for Lady Letitia. But she also perceived that Nesta did not wish it to be observed, and that she was anxious Lady Letitia should leave them. So with the ready tact of true friendship, she told Letitia she must take her away at once, for she had promised to be at home in time for

Di's singing-lesson. Letitia scarcely heard what she said, but mechanically followed, and took leave of the artist. And as she sat, during the drive home, by Lady Dumbleton's side, who forbore to question or distract her reverie, she was revolving in her mind what could have been the motive of Mr. O'Neil's sudden departure.

He had gone without saying a word; without even showing that he was aware of her presence. Was this because he saw that his cousin evinced this strange and most unexpected feeling for her? If anything had been wanting to rivet the chain, it was this: it was more than sufficient. Or could it be jealousy, that made him fancy she loved his cousin? could he imagine for a moment that his great fortune and position might win her heart? Ah, how she longed to talk to him at once—to hear the words which she saw so plainly written on his countenance! It was strange, but certainly true, that this sudden manner of his departure seemed to her a more decided indication that he cared for her, than even his words or looks had shown, and this trustfulness of love in her heart sealed her fate for life.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Oh my friends! learn not to be enraged against misfortunes.

SOPHOCLES.

As Nesta drove home from Paddington, she could not help feeling that the difficulties which had often, in fact almost continuously, beset her path in life, were now greater than ever. She had often almost despaired of her son; she saw that his peculiar disposition was singularly ill adapted to exercise judiciously the great responsibility which his enormous inheritance must entail, unless some stronger feeling, some passion, some greater influence than she possessed over him, were brought to bear on the formation of his character. She saw that Roland had his father's faults without possessing his intellect and power. She discerned plainly all the seeds of the same defects which had so greatly impeded Morgan's usefulness, and formed the chief

trials of her married life. But when her son's heart became apparently touched—when his enthusiasm became excited for Letitia—she began to hope that he might yet be saved; and not only saved, but that under the influence of such a mind as Letitia's, he might become almost worthy of the high position he must necessarily hold. And for the last month she had indulged in hopes that the trials she had suffered in former years would be atoned for by the sight of her son's happiness, in the truest and highest sense of the word. She knew how her husband's life had been embittered, and his character spoilt, by his own disappointment in Honoria, and she dreaded a similar sorrow for her son.

As soon as Nesta returned home, she wrote to Edwin, endeavouring to imply her thanks for the manner in which he had behaved, and expressing her conviction that he would influence her son if possible, or at any rate forgive for her sake any manifestation of temper or dislike on his part.

As she thought of the sacrifice Edwin had made in not endeavouring to see Letitia once more, and felt convinced that he would crush down this new-born happiness rather

than let it interfere to destroy Roland's hopes, Nesta's admiration and love for her nephew's disposition were so strongly excited, that for some moments she forgot her own sorrows in the contemplation of its beauty. This faculty of self-forgetfulness is only attained by the long habit of resignation and acceptance of suffering: the bowing down with meek reverence to the rod, feeling that it is inflicted by the hand of "Our Father who is in Heaven."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

But nothing is more delightful to an
Aged father than a daughter. The souls of males are indeed
Greater, but less sweet in their endearments.

EURIPIDES.

LADY DUMBLETON evidently suspected that something distressing had occurred to Letitia, for when she set her down at her mother's door in Grosvenor-square, the warm pressure of her hand on parting was more than usually kind. Letitia felt grateful for this silent sympathy, although she was convinced that Lady Dumbleton could not have divined the real cause of her grief.

There was nothing in Letitia's home life to assist in dispelling any ideas which occupied her vivid imagination and reflective mind.

She had scarcely any duties to distract her from her own thoughts. In the midst of so-called gaiety—caressed by the great world—yet her life was singularly isolated, and she often suffered from a painful con-

sciousness that she was of very little use to any one. Her two wild brothers were so unlike herself, and of late years so utterly beyond her powers of influence, that, even when they were at home, which was not often, she felt that her presence did not conduce either to their enjoyment or advantage.

In early childhood, when her father's mind still retained its power, she was often able to soothe and amuse him; but of late years he had been almost imbecile.

She fancied, however, that sometimes he still knew her, and had more pleasure in his meals, and in being wheeled out in the air, when she was present. But her mother laughed at the idea of his knowing one person from another, and, if the hours happened to interfere with any engagement, she would not allow her to waste her time, as she called it, upon the unconscious old man.

But it was to his room she went immediately on returning from that eventful visit to the studio, and throwing her arms round his neck, she wept upon his bosom.

Although it was impossible he could know she had any cause for sorrow, she felt there was more sympathy in his dim eyes than she could meet with from any one else in that house. And when he tried to raise his

poor paralysed hands to stroke her head, as he used to do when she was a child, she felt that his spirit was blessing her, or that he wished to soothe her sorrow.

The only person of the family, besides the poor unconscious old man, who seemed ever to sympathise with her, was old Lady Glenmaurice, the capriciously impulsive sister-in-law, whose admiration for Honoria's "honest simplicity, and generous warm-hearted Irish disposition," had induced her to advocate and keep up poor Lord Glenmaurice's infatuated love for the beauty of eighteen.

Old Lady Glenmaurice had never been cured of her sudden fits of admiration ; but she, or perhaps her friends and those who lived with her, suffered more from her disappointment ; and her temper and caprices became more difficult to bear. Upon the whole, she loved Letitia, perhaps better than any one else ; but she subjected her to many trials, and for weeks together, when she had taken something amiss, she would scarcely speak to her.

This year she did not come to London, so that Letitia had not even the duty (for she felt that it was an important one) of

bearing the old lady's caprices, and endeavouring to amuse and comfort her in her declining years and bodily infirmities.

So Letitia sat in her father's room till Honoria came to tell her it was time to dress for the dinner-party to which they were engaged.

"I thought I should find you here," said Lady Glenmaurice, "so I came on purpose to tell you, that you should put on that last new dress I ordered from Madame Day's, and wear your blue wreath—or no, perhaps you had better do your hair plain, no ornament—I believe that becomes you most."

"I will, certainly," said Letitia, who could scarcely conceal the surprise she felt at her mother's apparent anxiety about her dress. But she was grateful for this proof of care or affection, and she added: "And I am glad you told me, dear mamma, for it seems as if you cared for me a little."

"Nonsense, child. Why do you think I don't always care? Now go and dress. Stay—mind you make yourself particularly agreeable if you should happen to sit next Lord Blandon. He is—that is—I wish him to be favourably impressed by you."

"But he is not agreeable, therefore he

is not easy to amuse. He only stared at me when you introduced him at Lady Teviot's ball, and never spoke a word all through the quadrille."

"No, I know he did not; but he was struck by your beauty, notwithstanding. And I want to make use of his influence. He has no end of immense political interest, and, in fact, I haven't time to explain; but mind you obey my orders."

"Certainly," said Letitia, "for I always try to amuse; I try to find something to say to people, if I can."

"Well, you need not always do that, you stupid child. But remember, you must forward what I wish, and if a pleasant person happens to be the other side, still direct all your attention to Lord Blandon. Now go, and don't say anything more."

And Lady Glenmaurice left the room without taking any notice of her poor invalid husband, who Letitia fancied was conscious of the neglect, for he looked up in the face of his still splendidly beautiful wife, and followed her retreating figure with a kind of wondering, painful expression in his dim eyes.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A bad man loves evil pleasures.

EURIPIDES.

It so happened that Letitia was handed down to dinner by the very person her mother had mentioned—the young Lord Blandon—who seemed to scan her from head to foot with a rude stare.


She felt that he admired her, but in a very disagreeable kind of manner, and she found him, as she had told her mother, singularly unamusable. At least he did not seem to care for any of the subjects she ventured to originate, but as the dinner went on, he asked her various questions, what parties she had been at, or was going to, whether she enjoyed dancing and riding, &c. But she fancied that he looked too much bored to care what her replies were.

He was one of those hopelessly blazé

young men who are suffering from the consequences of a long minority and a large amount of capital, amassed by a guardian who had been scrupulously careful about the accumulation of the principal and interest of the fortune, while he was unscrupulously careless about the principles and best interests of his ward. For the honour of this country, it may be said that such is not often the case; and even if it were, there are many counteracting influences, so that upon the whole good preponderates. We meet with more kindness than the reverse in our passage through life, and we see indication of more good in the aggregate than of evil. I speak from long experience and an intimate acquaintance with the class which is often most maligned—the so-called great world.

Still Lord Blandon was a very disagreeable specimen of human nature, and of the misfortune of a large fortune and position inherited by a worthless person.

Towards the end of dinner, Letitia could not help seeing and feeling how worthless he was, although the innate goodness of her heart inclined her to make excuses for him, and attribute much to the natural stupidity and incapacity for which he was not ac-



countable. Could any one have shown her what he was twenty-two years before, her inexperience would have been painfully startled by the comparison! Then he was a blooming boy of five years of age, full of life and spirits, with a naturally generous temper, and heart that might have been affectionate, if its kindly feelings had been drawn out and fostered by a parent's love, and consequently that innate pride and self-conceit which often accompanies small intellect could have been checked.

But the reverse of all this had happened. No real unselfish love had been bestowed upon the orphan boy; perhaps no prayers breathed for his real good, for he was the son of unthinking parents.

And so the result was, that he sat there staring at Letitia, and becoming more disgustingly complimentary to her, till her patience was quite exhausted, and she was at last liberated by the signal for the ladies' departure.

"You did it very well," whispered her mother, as they went up-stairs. "I know he is a great bore, but I can't help that, for I promised to get his interest, and have it I must—coûte qu'il coûte."

"But what can I have to do with his vote or interest?"

"Never mind, child; you can't understand, and you need not either, only be civil, and don't shun him. There, that will do." And with a gesture of command the imperious Honoria turned her resolute back upon her daughter, and began to talk with great eagerness to Lady Teviot.

Letitia found herself near the plain daughter of that still great lady, and two other young ladies, whose faultless toilettes were, perhaps, the best part of them. And, as is often the case when three or four young ladies are thus chained together by a hard law, which condemns any employment of mind or body more active than to look over some drawings or prints, the conversation fell on the subject which is generally of most importance to young ladies—dress. Now, we ought not to sneer at or blame them for this, because to look well and appear to the best advantage is a duty we owe to our fellow-creatures, and to dress really well requires thought and cultivated taste, not mere dependence on a good milliner or coiffeur. All men like to see women well dressed, yet they often affect to despise

them for talking and thinking so much of it. To dress well requires an exertion of intellect, and the majority, who neither possess the necessary talent nor have inherited the graceful taste which makes them do most things well, would never be fit to be seen unless they turned their attention to their dress, and gave the subject due consideration. Therefore, it is quite natural they should talk of this uppermost subject.

Letitia was one of the gifted few. She was able to dress well without much expenditure of trouble or thought. But she tried to be amused with the conversation of the young ladies, and to help them, as far as she was able, by her grave advice on the subject, while she only hoped that they would still surround and listen to her as attentively when Lord Blandon should reappear.

Great was her relief when she saw Mr. Praid come into the room.

"I have been dining elsewhere," he said to Letitia, "and have looked in here early, before going on to Lady Sandown's. I am rewarded for this *détour* by finding you here." He then began to talk with her about Roland.

Mr. Praid had divined the wishes both of the young man and his mother, but he never felt sure how far the young lady herself was disposed to forward these wishes. But now, when he saw the deep blush which dyed her cheek at the mention of his name, and heard her trembling voice while she endeavoured to look calm, his hopes for them were, in a great degree, confirmed. For he did not calculate that the meeting with Edwin had produced so much effect—he only knew that she admired his poems—so he had no clue to the mystery which produced that blush and those embarrassed looks.

Soon afterwards the gentlemen came up from the dining-room; in a short time the party broke up: but Lord Blandon did not appear.

However, Letitia was not fated to have done with him that evening; for, on entering Lady Sandown's drawing-room, almost the first person they met was the obnoxious man.

Mr. Praid, whom she looked upon as a kind of protector, had not yet arrived, and there were no well-dressed young ladies near to shield her with their wide skirts.

When he put out his arm, and said to her, in a kind of indifferent, yet determined voice, "Come and have an ice in the refreshment-room," there was no one to assist her in resisting his appeal, for her mother gave her a firm push, and said, in a still more determined voice, "Yes, go, Letitia, it will do you good."

So he led her through the crowded rooms, or rather he squeezed her arm within his through the squeeze of people.

Her chief hope was that Lady Ardfinnan, who had promised to meet her at Lady Sandown's, would be somewhere on the way; for, if she could but catch a sight of that dear face, she felt that nothing would prevent her from going up and talking to her, however rude it might appear towards Lord Blandon. But they arrived at the supper-room, and space was opened for them till they reached the table; then it closed in a dense mass behind them immediately, and there was no one near with whom she was acquainted. She took the offered ice, and he drank several glasses of champagne, and, as the wine he drank at the dinner-party was more than he could well stand, his agreeability was not increased by these ad-

ditional glasses. She complained of the heat, and said she wished to return to the room where she had left her mother.

"Ah! mamma don't want you; and if—you are too hot, here's another ice—or I'll—I'll tell you what we'll do—we'll go into the conservatory. Beautiful flowers, cool air—come along."

The dense mass was again opened, and, as this room opened into the conservatory, they soon exchanged its cool shade for the heat and glare of the supper-room.

Fortunately (as Letitia thought), many persons had done the same, so she patiently looked about as she remembered there was also a chance of her finding Lady Ardfinnan here.

In the mean time, Honoria was talking to the minister, to whom she had promised the votes, and was in full feather, energetically expressing her belief that she was sure of success with Lord Blandon, when Mr. Praid's sarcastic voice joined in:

"Lord Blandon! Oh yes, that is probable, for any fool could influence him who is only bad enough to humour his worst qualities."

"What do you mean, Mr. Praid?"

"What do I mean? I'll answer that in your Paddy fashion by asking another question. What have you done with your daughter—eh? Answer me that, or I will say something you will not like that any one should hear."

"How can I tell what Letitia is doing? Probably talking to her dear friend Lady Ardfinnan, for aught I know. But, if you want so much to know, I will come with you in search of her. Remember, all right," she said to the minister, as she turned away with Mr. Praid.

"All wrong, I am afraid," said Mr. Praid, "and I dare say we shall find them in the supper-room."

"No, I don't think Letitia is likely to go there, for she never wants anything."

"We will look there first, however," said Mr. Praid, with a determined air, while he drew her arm as firmly within his as Lord Bandon had Letitia's, and she could not get away from him, although many dear friends, who she said she was dying to see, were passed on the way. But he would not let her slip. At last they reached the refreshment-room.

"Is Lord Bandon here?" inquired Mr. Praid of little Jack Surtees.

"He was there at the supper-table with Lady Letitia Glenmaurice a few minutes ago; but I saw them afterwards go into the conservatory."

"There, I am right in my suspicion that all is wrong. And now, listen to me," continued Mr. Praid: "unless you contrive to extricate your daughter from that scoundrel, I will publish to the world all I know—all I can prove against you."

"How dare you!" hissed Honoria between her set teeth; "it is shameful of you to say such things."

"I said nothing; but I *will* declare all," he repeated, as they approached the conservatory door. "Now, if ever you play this infamous game again, I——"

"Why, if he wants to marry the girl, why shouldn't he?"

"Why should he not? No: I would much prefer to see her in her grave. And so would any one who is not utterly perverted."

"Well, I can only say many mothers would jump at it."

"More shame for them. Come on quickly. I suppose they must be at the farther end. He has taken her away from the crowded part."

They found them at last where Mr. Praid expected; Letitia was looking pale and agitated; and he saw that she was forcibly endeavouring to withdraw her arm from that of her odious companion. The instant she saw him she rushed towards him and he eagerly took her arm.

"You are my guardian angel," whispered Letitia, as they quickly left the shady part of the conservatory.

"That man is always my evil genius," thought Honoria, as she endeavoured to soothe the ruffled temper of the man whose influence she wished to gain.

Mr. Praid was certain that this task would take some time to accomplish, and he therefore told the still trembling Letitia that he would, if she liked, go with her to find Lady Ardfinnan.

"Ah, I would give anything to see her; her calm lovely face always makes me feel quite happy. I cannot imagine the possibility of any misfortune when I am with her. I often think her eyes have a sort of strange power of transmitting beauty to all they look on. No one ever ventures to utter a bitter or ill-natured remark in her presence; and I am certain that there is a sort

of halo of light round her head, as we see in the pictures of saints and martyrs in old times."

"Very likely, for she is one; and, by the comparative hush and gentler tones of Lady Teviot's shrill voice, I think she must be speaking to her. Yes, there she is. Here, Lady Ardfinnan, is a lady who is anxious to be made happy by the sight of your eyes."

"I hope so," said Nesta, as she put out both her hands and pressed Letitia's. "And I have good news for you, too, Mr. Praid. I had a letter from Aunt Mary this evening, telling me that she is coming to town. And I have written to insist on her coming to our house. She has been staying a long time with Lord Mowbray."

"That is good news, indeed; R—— was talking of her half an hour ago, and he was saying she is very wrong to deprive all her old friends of the sight of her face, season after season."

"Poor dear Aunt Mary, London does not agree with her, and I know she regrets it, because she thinks that she is of some use to those who like her; but she told me that she should regret it still more if Mr. Praid did not keep firm in his place of ball-

room sermoniser. She calls you a kind of intellectual and moral master of the ceremonies, and says that if general society were deserted by such persons as you are, it would become very much worse."

Well-nigh twenty years have passed since then. Has Aunt Mary's conditional prediction been verified? Let those who are in a position to compare society as it was with society as it is, answer the question.



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